

Bison Horn Maria

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535 dance, which makes everyone laugh, while all the mediums of neighbouring villages attend, and, possessed by their godlings, leap wildly to and fro, carrying bunches of *saja* leaves in their hands or holding them over their matted hair, to the general merriment. The chief wedding dance is the bison dance, every male turning at intervals in his paces to smile and 'glad-eye' the next dancer, and each then pretending to butt the other with his bison-horns; in another figure they similarly mimic two cocks fighting. The greatest sign of skill is to be able to impale on the tip of the horns a piece of grass twisted into a ring and thrown on the ground; the dancer may before this pretend to be a young and frisky bull, butting at wisps of grass or trees, or hurling them into the air to toss them on his horns. I have seen a dancer pick a small finger ring off the ground on the tip of his horns. As among the Hill 535 Marias, and indeed most Central Provinces Gonds, there is always 831 a comic and obscene element; men wearing black gourd masks with thick hair and beards of black bear or goat fur, and carrying clubs, nets and dummy guns, rush in and out amongst the dancers, making obscenely suggestive gestures with their clubs at the dancing or onlooking girls, and provoking roars of laughter.

[273] There is generally a pause for *landa* or *mahua* spirit sooner or later, after which the girls sometimes, before resuming the dance, sit in a bunch swaying from their hips and singing short catchy refrains, with either frankly sexual meaning or no meaning at all; and often the lads opposite make the whole company laugh by imitating them in falsetto.

The dancing and singing, it need hardly be said, lead on frequently to love-making, couples retiring into the darkness, or else starting an affair ending in experimental union and perhaps, later, in matrimony.

E. Other Amusements

524 The Bison-horn Marias' favourite pastime of cock-fighting has already been described (see page 162 above). Small wooden toys are made for the children, very crude representations of tigers or other animals; and a pathetic sight at the graves of children are these toys left there for the *Asana*² of the children to play with. I have never found any Marias making string figures; and they have 526 shown no interest in attempts to demonstrate them. The Murias and Bhattaras have innumerable games in which all the village youth takes part in the cold weather and spring nights, many of which

² Literally the 'Game' used of the spirits of the dead.

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618 villages by the headman of the Bison-horn Pharaspal *pargana*. The god had long ago produced a son worshipped as clan-god in the Atami village of Chudala Karka, now a Bison-horn village. But the son's dependence on the parent was shown by the practice of the Tumirgunda clan-priest every third year making a new network of peacock's quills for encasing the front cross-piece of the Chudala Karka son. The *modul-waddai* shaves his beard only when he has to start to make a new quill network, and lets it grow after that till it has again to be replaced three years later. Chudala Karka pays Tumirgunda for this network a pig, a *khendi* of 164 lb. of husked rice and a pot of *mahua* spirit. In the *pen-rasar* hut of the god at Tumirgunda was yet another son, already named Hunga Gunda Mo'itto Pen, who was being made for another Atami village in the 'see', and was to be taken to it as soon as he was a year old; he then consisted only of one bamboo pole tipped with a silver cone and adorned with bunches of peacock feathers. Here perhaps the need for separation was arising because the Atami villages were adopting or had adopted Bison-horn ways, while the village for which the new god was being 'born' was some way from Chudala Karka, and effectively separated from it by the Indrawati river. So at Kurmer at the end of 1929 Nule Harma, god of the Deda clan, was producing a 'son' for some distant villages of the clan; and we have already seen how the Gume clan of the Barsur Mar *pargana* acquired from the Jaterom of Mohnar not only a younger brother of their god, but a Jate family to be his clan-priest.

The *Gazetteer* has been quoted as suggesting that the system of separate areas and separate gods for each clan was breaking down. Among the Hill Marias the remark is justified to the following extent only. Many of the old villages of the Bhairamgarh Mar and Kutru Mar *parganas* of the Kutru zamindari have disappeared, including indeed the two which Glasford gave as the seats of the chief Hill Maria clan-gods of his time. Many clans have disappeared or are reduced to one or two households. There are various causes; maladministration leading to exodus to the tahsils of the plains or the Chanda district, the great 1918 influenza epidemic, and the ravages of yaws. The total disappearance of clans is evidenced by the presence in villages now settled by other clans of *astokai* rows of menhirs erected for the Departed of forgotten clans, quite distinct from those erected by the present clan, which can give no information at all about its predecessors. Clans greatly diminished in numbers soon find that they cannot economically manage to keep even one village going on their traditional clan-area, much less keep effective control and user of all the alternative *penda* slopes of the area. The drugs, therefore, of three or four clans may settle

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first solid food the new grain and meat cooked in the Pot of the Departed.

It will be seen in the sections of the next part of this book that deal with birth, marriage and funeral customs that there are further rites, either indicating the power of the Departed to influence the fortunes of their posterity, or designed to propitiate them. Such are the searching of the body of a new-born baby for the birth-marks of some ancestor; the libations to the Departed in the betrothal and marriage ceremonies of all Marias and the sacrificial meal given to Bison-horn bride and bridegroom before the Pot of the Departed in the bridegroom's father's house; the ascertaining at Hill Maria funerals whether the death was due to the wrath of the Departed; the special precautions taken in the obsequies of persons killed by tigers or lightning, victims of small-pox and pregnant women; and in Hill and Bison-horn obsequies the attempt finally to lay or placate the Departed by the erection of a menhir in the *kotohal* or *washal*.

The word *hasal* is simply a past participial form of the verb *hasdama*, 'to go'; 'Departed' is thus a literal translation. It has a sound of finality about it, as though the dead, once departed, were finished with; and indeed men of the hill clans that do not erect menhirs for the dead are apt to assert that this is the case, and that they never worry further about their dead after they have been cremated or buried. Yet there are many signs that even they do not really think so. All Marias, it has already been observed,¹ are shy of talking about the Departed, though it takes little to get them to discuss other religious beliefs and ceremonies. I have had Hill Marias denying that they do anything for the Departed or offer them anything at death or the new-eating festivals, and then either found at their new graves a wooden *hasal-gutta* post and a stone *hasal-garya* seat for the Departed, with a sacrificed cow's tail and foot hanging from a tree close by, or discovered a Pot and Hearth of the Departed in their *lowa*. There is almost certainly not a Maria who does not believe that for some time, at least, after their death the Departed are to be feared and appeased by the necessary offerings and memorials.

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This fear of the *Hasal* as likely to cause illness, death, the attacks of tigers or famine (for it is these apprehensions that lie behind most of the observances catalogued in the first two paragraphs of this chapter) may operate also not to the alarm of the righteously only, but as a protection to him because of its efficacy in deterring others from offences against the house. Goods stored in the *lowa* of the Hill Marias and the *wijja-low* of the Bison-horn

¹ See p. 193.

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who would perhaps punish evil-doers somewhere after death; but no one could say who or where Ispural was, or where the sinful would be judged and punished. It is possibly a faint echo of missionary teaching passed on by bazaar gossip. All Marias agree that the dead are somewhere underground; men, animals, trees, and perhaps rivers and streams have in them *jivas*, a principal of life, and some say that when a man dies his *jiva* goes to Pogho Bhum, the sky, while that part which is cremated or buried goes below the earth and is his *kamal*. There is a belief that the menhirs erected at the *hotokai* or *waskai* increase in size if the *kamal* commemorated by it is happy. There are traces of an embryo belief in reincarnation in the practice among Hill Marias of examining a new-born baby to see if it has the same birth-marks as a dead ancestor and, if so, of naming it after the ancestor if of the same sex, or his spouse if of the other sex. Hindu ideas are beginning to influence Bison-horn Marias; tombs are erected sometimes by the side of the menhir in the *waskai*, thatched over to protect the dead from the heat of the sun, and with a pot of cold water, replenished from time to time, hung over the memorial to drip through a small hole in the pot to cool him further. But, like their ideas about the earth and the gods, the Marias' ideas about the Departed and the after-life are very indefinite and vary from place to place; it is safe only to go on their actual practice, and not on what some of them will say by way of generalization or theory; the latter are certain to be those who have had most contact with the outer world and persons of other faiths. There is one practical way in which old Bison-horn men show their belief in some future existence. They often choose before death the cow or bullock to be sacrificed when their menhir is erected in the *waskai*; and it is alleged that if the heir thinks it better to slay some other animal, the animal chosen by the dead man always pines to death. The graves of Hill and Bison-horn Marias are adorned with strips of cloth, spears, fishing-rods and other things they may need hereafter, and their ornaments are buried often with them.

B. Magic and Witchcraft

We have seen before that such is the ignorance of the local Hindus about the Marias that, in the words used by Glasford in 1868, 'the simple and unsophisticated Gond tribes are believed to be expert necromancers, and on the most intimate footing with evil spirits'; and that the Marias have a totally undeserved reputation as physicians, although their general idea of sickness

* Report, p. 30. 2[See cat. 116, p. 423]

CHAPTER XVI

DEATH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES

A. *Hill Marias*

THE ordinary rule throughout the Abujhmar hills is to cremate the bodies of headmen and elders of influence and standing and of their wives, and to bury all others. 764 766

Except on the southern fringes of the hills, where the villages are influenced by contact with their Bison-horn Maria neighbours, the Hill Marias do not follow the Bison-horn custom of beating a drum from the roof of the house, which Russell and Hiralal predicate of all Marias. The custom is creeping into the hills from south of the Indrawati, and has for example already reached the Kutru Hill Maria villages of Lakka (Lanka) and Karangal; but there it is reserved for men of higher status. The drum used is the hill *turam* kettle-drum, and is usually one of those kept in the village dormitory; the village lads beat it continuously day and night from the death till the burial or cremation of the body. [534]

News of the death is sent out to all the brother-clan and wife-clan relatives and friends of the deceased. The funeral is postponed for two or three days, to give them time to assemble. Then all the women gather in and around the house where the body is lying. A man is never left to die on a cot, but is lifted on to the ground as his end draws near; they say that their reason for this custom is simply that they do not want the dying man to fall off the cot in a last convulsion. Women are never allowed to sleep on a cot. They close the eyes of the corpse, and lift it on to a rough wicker-work bier, covering it over with a length of cloth. It is burned or buried with the clothes and jewellery that were on it at death. The women sit around the corpse and outside in the street, and break into loud keening for the dead. 764 763

For the last rites the body is not washed or otherwise prepared, but is left just as it was composed after death. Friends and relatives carry it out on the bier, the only person for whom it is taboo to touch or carry a body being the *waddai* clan-priest medium and his medium assistant (*laka*). The bier heads the procession to the burial and cremation ground, and is followed by the remaining relatives and friends, the women still keening and beating their breasts. 764

764 Both for burial and for cremation most Hill Marias place the body in the grave or on the pyre with the head, face upwards, towards the sunrise and the feet towards the sunset; the Usendi clan, however, reverses this.

761 764 When the death is obviously a natural death after a long life, and there can be no suspicion of magic, nothing is done at the funeral to ascertain the cause of death. But if, for example, a man or woman dies suddenly in the prime of life for no apparent reason, the bearers halt on the path just by the funeral ground, and stand with the bier resting on their shoulders. The *waddai* takes seven *saja* leaves, and places them in a row on the ground a few paces away from the bier. One leaf represents the Earth or Bhum, and stands for death through the displeasure of the Village Mother; the second stands for death through sickness; the third for death through the displeasure of the clan-god and the Departed (*pen-konal*); the fourth for death through the magic of a fellow-villager; the fifth for death from the magic of a man whose enmity has been aroused against the deceased by a quarrel or exchange of abuses; the sixth for death from the magic of a *waddai* or magician; and the seventh for death from natural causes. The *waddai* or, if he is not present, the *kasyey-gaita* or the *gaita*, strikes the earth three times with an axe, and calls on the corpse to disclose the cause of its death. The corpse is then believed to impel the bearers to carry it to one of the leaves and stand on it; or else the *waddai* first excites the corpse by scattering husked grain over it till it moves the bearers to one of the leaves. The bearers then leap eight or nine paces away from the leaf, and stand with their backs to the row of leaves. They must not look behind them while the *waddai* changes the order of the leaves, after which the corpse has again to impel its bearers to stand on one of the leaves. Three or four times in all the process is repeated, the leaves being rearranged each time behind the backs of the bearers; and if each time the corpse indicates the same leaf, despite its changes of position, the company is satisfied that it has truly revealed the cause of its death. If in successive tests it indicates different leaves, they assume that there was nothing wrong with the death. In old days the elders stated that if the corpse indicated magic as the cause, the *waddai* at once called on it to point out the magician among those present at the funeral, or in the dead man's village or an adjacent village; but nowadays they do not proceed to an immediate witch-hunt; a seed of suspicion has, however, been sown which will sooner or later grow into assault or murder.

764 Then, if the body is to be buried, the bearers bring it to the grave, which is dug only waist-deep, lift it off the bier and place it in

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the grave, with its face upwards, and, normally, its feet towards the sunset. The senior near kinsman present then throws a clod of earth on the head of the corpse, and says, 'This is all I can now do for you, and I give you my portion.' Then each near kinsman present flings a clod into the grave, uttering the same formula, followed by five elders of the village, who therefore are distant kinsmen, and after them by any affines who may be present. If there are no near kinsmen present, the five village elders take the lead in the ceremony. The women take no part in this. The dead man's *erramlogh* (that is, his wife's elder brother or his own younger sister's husband) will have brought to the grave the dead man's spare clothes, if any, his ornaments, his axe (but not his bow and arrows), his hoe (*gudari*), his cot and his dancing clothes and ornaments; generally all or some of his cooking pots are also taken to the grave. It may be added that the *erramlogh* has the duty, when he arrives, of uncovering the body and inspecting it for any signs of foul play. When a woman dies, it is still her husband's *erramlogh*, generally her elder brother, who performs these offices. The property thus brought to the grave is either buried with the body or hung up on *saja* trees over or near the grave, or on the fence or *hawal-gutta* posts erected around or in front of the grave. When the men present have dropped their clods on the body, the earth is shovelled into the grave from all sides, and heaped well over it. Over the mound thus made, leaves are spread, and over them logs are piled. Burial or cremation always takes place in the evening, it being the rule not to bring the body out of the house till about 4 p.m. The grave is dug, or the pyre made ready, as the case may be, about four or five hours beforehand, and the keening of the women begins in the early morning and lasts till the body reaches the funeral ground.

While some men are digging the grave, others cut posts of *saja* wood in the forest hard by, clear them of bark, and roughly carve them with their axes and knives in the manner shown in the bottom illustration of Plate XX, often carving at the top of the posts rude representations of peacocks. On the Kutru side of the hills the rule is to set up two large posts of this kind in front of the grave, and a smaller and much plainer post at the four corners of the grave. The posts are called *hawal-gutta*. As soon as the grave has been completed, these posts are set up, and the *erramlogh* of a dead man or the brother of a dead woman, makes at the foot of one of the two large front posts a small stone cromlech, known as *hawal-garya* (throne of the departed), pours a little *makas* spirit on the ground by the foot of each post and on the table-stone of the cromlech, on the latter of which he also strews a little husked grain. He takes

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764 then a small chick, twists its neck, breaking the skin of its throat with his nails, sprinkles its blood on the rice, and leaves it there. He then ties a piece of cloth brought from his own house to the boughs of a *saja* tree overhanging the grave, and other pieces handed to him by relatives and friends who wish to honour the dead man, as well as strips of the dead man's clothes brought from his house. Next he, and after him the other affines of the dead man in turn, or, if a married woman has been buried, her father's kindred, take a leaf-cupful of *mahua* spirit, pouring a drop on the grave as an offering to the dead person, and after them the kinsmen of the dead do likewise. The *erramtoḡ* also offers the *hanal* little *ḍadiya*¹ baskets of rice and *kutḡi*, and an empty miniature *handi* (pot). The kinsmen of the dead man have to provide the *mahua* spirit and the grain, baskets and pot. Finally the grave, except the two front *hanal-gutḡa* posts, is generally surrounded with a fence of criss-crossed strips of bamboo.

766 For a cremation the procedure is much the same. The pyre is made ready beforehand, like the grave, and the body is laid on it. The *erramtoḡ* brings a burning log from the hearth of the dead man's house, and with it kindles the pyre; and then the kinsmen, the five village elders, and the affines each place a small piece of wood on the head of the corpse, uttering the same formula as when they throw clods of earth on a body in a grave. The pyre is almost always made at the foot of a *mahua* tree. They pile no leaves or logs over the ashes, but leave them there to the mercy of the elements, after fencing them, setting up *hanal-gutḡa* posts and a *hanal-garya* cromlech, and tying strips of cloth to overhanging *saja* boughs.

764 The ritual varies in different parts of the hills. In some tracts, particularly near Orcha and on the Narainpur side of the hills, they set up only one *hanal-gutḡa* post, in front of the grave, or none at all. The *mahua* spirit ritual also varies. After earth leaves and logs have been piled over the grave, and the *hanal-gutḡa* post and the cromlech, if any, have been set up, the *erramtoḡ* takes a leaf-cupful of liquor, pours a drop or two from it on the earth and logs piled above the head of the corpse, and drinks what remains; this is done after him in turn by the male affines, the kinsmen, and the women present.

The dead man's cot or sleeping-mat and the bier on which his body was carried to the funeral are always left by the grave; and often his dancing head-dress is deposited on the top of one of the *hanal-gutḡa* posts, while the grave is further adorned with his old fishing-rods and wooden representations of spears and axes. The bottom illustration on Plate XX shows a typical burial grave in

¹ See page 173 above.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

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Hill Maria

PLATE XX

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Mourning over a corpse, Handawada
(Photograph by Baron E. von Eichstedt)



Keening for a dead woman, Ihera Tondawada



Burial grave at Nagur, Ketru Mar
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764 the village of Nugur, with the cromlech in front of the two large *hanal-gutta* posts and behind them two of the small corner *hanal-gutta* posts and the log- and leaf-piled grave. At a cremation grave seen at Handawada, where the ashes of the pyre were still fresh, there was no *hanal-gutta* or cromlech, and the only offering to the dead visible was a small basket that contained the funerary grain, fixed at the top of the fence erected round the grave. The usual strips of cloth were hung from the boughs of trees overhead. The wicker-work frames of dancing shields were also suspended from the fence, although, as related on page 76 above, the use of these dancing shields has for the time been abandoned. The Nugur photograph on Plate XX shows dancing head-dresses on top of the two large *hanal-gutta* posts, a large imitation spear of bamboo between them, and strips of cloth hanging from long bamboo saplings planted in the ground, as there were no reasonably low overhanging boughs. The two upper photographs on the plate show women mourners around a sheeted body in a house at Handawada, and keeners outside a house at Bhera Tondawada at noon before a funeral.

Immediately after the actual funeral in many parts of the hills all the mourners proceed from the funeral ground to a spot by the side of one of the paths entering the village. There the *erramtogh* or the next nearest affine relative present builds a small cairn from 1½ to 2½ feet high, surmounted by a flat cap-stone; the cairn is known as a *marma-kal* or *marman-gal*. On the cap-stone he and each of the householders present places a pinch of rice or *kutki* grain, addresses the dead man by name, and tells him that he gives him this food to eat. All then go home. In the Tapalibhum, Behramar and Sonpur Mar *parganas* the dead man's heir or *jiya-bital* sets up this cairn on the path a little way from the burial or cremation ground. At the selected spot he clears the ground, places a little grain on it, and makes a small chicken peck at the grain; he then cuts its throat behind his back with a knife, the *erramtogh* or some other near affine places a large flat stone at the side of the dead chicken, and the heir piles stones over it. No words are uttered while this is done. Here they call the cairn *kory-kotiltana-kal*, or 'chicken-feeding stone', and do not know the term *marma-kal*. In the Farsal, Bardal, Tulagotal, Hukkagotal and Farsigotal *parganas* they apply the term *marma-kal* to a small stone set up by the side of the path leading from the village to the *hotokal* row of menhirs for the dead as a temporary consolation for the departed when the heir has not sufficient grain or money to erect a menhir immediately after the funeral.

765 Mourning is observed for four days after the funeral, and it is taboo for the heir and the men of the deceased's family to go to

765 work in this period. Often a house or a portion of a house in which a death has occurred is shut up and not re-occupied. It is, however, not repaired. So long as it stands, it is regarded as a memorial of the dead. On the day after the funeral, if the house is still to be occupied, the rooms and the surroundings are cleaned out, and the floors are re-plastered. On the first three mornings after the funeral they place a little meal from the Pot of the Departed on the grave as an offering. At the end of the period of mourning the heir, if rich enough, should proceed at once to set up a menhir to the dead in the *kotokal*, in the *parganas* and villages where these menhirs are still erected. If, however, he cannot yet afford to do so, he goes to the graveside, bows before the *hanal-garya* cromlech, tells the dead man's *hanal* that he is sorry that he cannot yet afford to erect his stone, and begs him to be patient, to forgive him for the delay and not to harass him. It may take him two or three years to collect the necessary grain and money for feeding those who are to help him to find and erect a suitable menhir. In many parts of the hills the custom has fallen into disuse, because of its cost. But it is still common on the Kutru side of the hills, in Tulagotal, Hukkagotal, Farsigotal, Farsal, Bardal, Tapalibhum, Padalibhum, Nurbhum, Behramar and Sonpur *parganas*, and also prevails in Dugal and other neighbouring Jhoria Muria *parganas*. In Chhota Dongar *pargana* few clans now erect either *marmahal* or *kotokal* stones, though in many villages old rows of *kotokal* menhirs attest the former prevalence of the practice; the Bokalur are almost the only clan there who still erect them. From Adeq in that *pargana* rows of menhirs will be met by the traveller at Itulnar in Bhairamgarh Mar, between Itulnar and Hikul in Barsur Mar, and at Toinar and other villages in the latter *pargana*; but the clans now occupying these areas do not erect menhirs, and say that the rows still standing were erected ages ago by clans no longer known, though the Gumelur attribute the menhirs in their village of Toinar to the long extinct Timor clan. The Tamor of Tumirgunda between Handawada and the Indrawati have a *kotokal* on the hill path to Hirameta, but have erected no new menhir there for years, and say that nowadays no stone is set up till three generations have elapsed after death; they admit that this is practically a confession that the practice has been abandoned, and say that it was found to be too expensive.

When, however, the heir has enough grain and money to pay for the food and drink needed for the erection of a menhir, whether on the fourth day after death, or after the lapse of some months or years, he calls together his relatives and friends, and all go off into the forest to look for a suitable stone. The only consideration

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

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guiding their choice is the adequacy of their resources to provide food and drink for the men required to drag or carry the stone. The menhirs in the Abujmar country and the adjacent Muria tracts are considerably smaller than the vast menhirs sometimes met in the Bison-horn country; the largest that I have seen, at Lakka in Kutru Mar, were just over 8 feet high, and about 2½ feet wide by 10 inches thick at the base. They drag out the selected stone from its resting-place, and place under it several cross-pieces of wood, and on each side of it a long thick pole, to which the cross-pieces are lashed. The stone is then lashed to the cross-pieces, and the poles are lifted on to the shoulders of the bearers, from twenty to thirty in number, and so the journey to the *hotohal* begins. At intervals they stop, and are given by the heir drinks of *mahua* spirit, which is considered to give them strength to bear the burden; and they are given at least one meal on the way. There will also be reserves of bearers, who carry the food and drink and cooking pots, to be entertained. So they ultimately reach the *hotohal* and deposit the stone on the ground at the appointed spot. If it is too late to erect it that evening, a feast follows at the heir's house, and all night the men and women dance with their wife-clan (*ahomama*) relatives. In the following afternoon the stone is erected under the supervision of the *avramtogh* or the senior wife-clan relative present. A hole is dug in the ground at one end of the stone and then the stone, if small, is pulled upright by willing hands and held there while the earth is shovelled in. If it is large and heavy, ropes are lashed round the far end and used to pull it upright, with its base in the hole, and ten men or so hold poles on both sides of its apex to prevent it falling over, while others ram small stones, earth and turves around its base. In Kutru Mar, Chhota Dongar Mar, Behramar, Tapalibhum and Sonpur Mar a *kanal-garya* cromlech is then made at the base of the menhir, and the heir of the dead man comes up to it, and squats on the ground with his back to the menhir and the cromlech. He takes an eight or nine days old chicken, and, holding it behind his back and never looking at the stone, cuts its throat with the nails of his hand, sprinkles its blood on the table-stone of the cromlech, and pushes its body under the table-stone; next he places an offering of rice or *hutki* grain on the table-stone. As he makes the offerings he speaks to the dead man, saying, 'Whether you were killed by magic, or by the wrath of the clan-god and the Departed, or died naturally, I know not. But now I have put up this menhir for you, and you must wander no more. Stay here in peace for ever, and do not worry us your descendants.' In Tapalibhum and Behramar they erect the stone and sacrifice the chicken in silence. Only the heir has to keep his

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764 back to the menhir; all others present may watch the whole proceedings. In Padalibhum and parts of Nurbhum they do not sacrifice a chicken, but only place an offering of grain on the cromlech. In Farsal, Bardal and the three Gotal *parganas* they then usually kill a boar a few yards away from the menhir, stretching it out on its stomach, two men holding it down with a pole across its neck, while a third man kills it with blows from the blunt side of the axe-head. They boil and eat the pork there, men, women and children, but give no part of it to the *hanal* and do not even hang its tail over the top of the menhir. In these *parganas* they assert that they have given up sacrificing a cow after the erection of the menhir; but I should be surprised if this assertion were strictly true. A similar claim was made by the Padali headmen of Padalibhum; but Bardal Gille, the headman of Rawan in that *pargana*, stated that some clans still offered a cow and hung its tail from the menhir. There is still a fear of offending Hindu State officials by frankly admitting the slaughter of cows. Cow sacrifice is further limited by the comparative scarcity of cattle in many parts of the Abujhmar hills, whereas pigs are plentiful. Even where they assert that they no longer sacrifice cows they do not scruple to eat the flesh of a cow that has died a natural death or been killed by a tiger.

In Kutru Mar they do not erect stones brought to the *kolohal* for women and children, but leave them flat on the ground. The stones for women and children, whether erected or prone, are always smaller than those erected for men. There is a general belief that menhirs increase or decrease in size according as the *hanal* is satisfied or not.

769 After the chicken and grain have been offered on the cromlech at the foot of the menhir, the heir, still turning his back on the menhir, goes off at once to the nearest pool of water, followed by the others present, and all wash their arms and legs and return to the village. Where cow sacrifice is still in vogue, as in Tapalibhum, Behramar and Sonpur Mar *parganas*, the *evamlogh* then sacrifices a cow or a pig or both, generally in the *lonsu* room of the heir's house before the Pot of the Departed, using the blunt side of the axe-head, saying to the dead man, '*Niwa nade mat hauhin toroni. Idak mah suk-dak kemek manu*', or, 'I sacrifice this in your name; hereafter keep still and do not make trouble for us!' The tuft at the end of the cow's tail is fastened to a loop of cord, and hung over the apex of the menhir just erected. The heir then entertains all who have assembled to a second dinner, off the sacrificed beef and pork, and the night ends in dancing and liquor. Needless to say, this procedure is costly, and many a *hanal* has to rest content with a *marma-hal* cairn.

2[See cont. 116, p. 423. - Awa (p. 17)]

FUNERAL CEREMONIES

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Where, as in Orcha and most of the surrounding villages of the Chhota Dongar *pargana*, *hotokal* menhirs are no longer erected, a cow or pig is nevertheless sacrificed in this way in the village on the night after the funeral at the heir's house, and portions of the flesh or the liver when cooked are placed under the *cromlech* at the base of the *kanal-gutta* post, or, if there is no *cromlech*, on the grave, while the tail, and sometimes also a lower leg, from hock to hoof, are fastened by a cord from an overhanging *saja* bough. The usual feast and dance then follow.

One reason for the abandonment of the custom of erecting menhirs may be that the clans which have abandoned it have in fairly recent times abandoned their traditional for their present clan-areas; for it was the rule that the menhir should always be erected in the village from which the dead man or his ancestors had originally come, not in the village at which he was living at the time of his death.

A person who has killed himself, or who dies from cholera or small-pox, is not buried or cremated at the regular funeral ground, but in the forest at some distance from it. There had been no recent case in any village which I visited of a woman dying when pregnant or in child-birth, and no one could say what would be done in such a case.

Treatment of abnormal deaths
Persons killed by tigers or other wild animals must be burned, not buried, at the place where their remains are found, or to which they are brought for the inquest. They must never be brought into a village, for otherwise the dead man's *kanal* may bring the tiger there. The remains, if scattered, are collected and placed in a cloth brought from the dead man's house; but such bodies should be touched as little as possible. Logs are piled under the body where it lies and kindled, and anything found with the body or at the place where the tiger attacked the dead man is burnt with it; but no dancing dresses or other property are brought from his house to be burned with him, and no offerings of grain or *malua* spirit are made at the grave. No *marma-kai* cairn and no *hotokal* menhir are set up for him; but there is nothing to prevent this being done for the victims of cholera or smallpox.

B. Bison-horn Marias

The true Bison-horn Marias, as distinguished from members of clans once Hill Maria in culture but now adopting Bison-horn customs, cremate all their dead except those who die from abnormal causes. When a man dies, his son-in-law is sent for, and on arrival climbs on to the roof of the house with a *dol* drum, which he beats

763 for some time with a series of one long followed by two short beats to announce that a death has occurred in the house; he then climbs down, and continues this drumming on the ground until the relatives and friends of the dead man assemble, or until the body is taken out to be cremated. Sometimes they fire guns at intervals for the same purpose. Messengers are sent out to neighbouring villages to bid relatives to the funeral.

• 764 When all the men and women have assembled the body is taken out of the house and washed with a pot of water and anointed with a mixture of ground turmeric and oil. They then spread a cloth on a bier of bamboo wicker-work, lay the body on it, and spread a cloth over it. Each male relative who can afford it brings a cloth and similarly spreads it over the body. Four men then carry the bier on their shoulders to the cremation ground, followed by all the [533] mourners, and men beating the dactylic funeral drum-beat. The pyre is made there, the body laid on it with head to the east and feet to the west, and covered over with fuel. Two men, generally two sons, or two sons-in-law, or a son and a son-in-law, then kindle the pyre at the head and the feet of the body respectively. As soon as the pyre is blazing fiercely the company leaves the cremation ground and returns to the dead man's house for food. The cremation ground is almost always on the side of the path or road opposite to the row of menhirs erected to commemorate the dead, which is known to the Bison-horn Marias as *waskal*.

[787] On the next day all go to the cremation ground to see whether the body has been completely reduced to ashes; if any portion [761] remains unburnt, it is a sign that the death was due to the magic of some enemy. All condole with the members of the bereaved family and return to their houses.

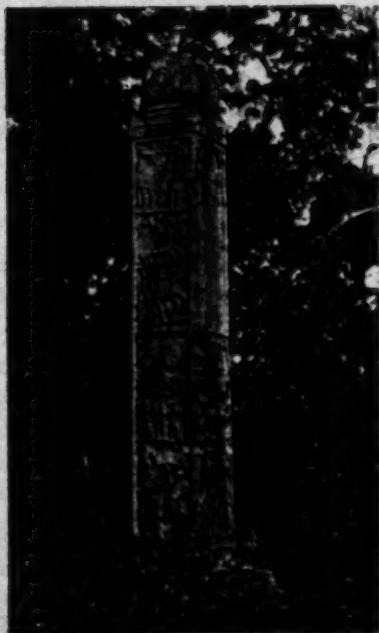
On the next Saturday morning comes the erection of the *waskal* menhir. There are *waskal* with great numbers of menhirs almost everywhere in the Bison-horn country, and in most parts villagers continue to erect them for men, women and children whenever a death occurs. [718] On the Jagdalpur side, however, and around Paknar, though every village has its *waskal*, new menhirs are seldom set up in these days, the reason given being always that the ceremony is too expensive. It is indeed expensive, for if properly done it involves the killing of at least one, and possibly two cows, a pig or two, and the provision of three or four *khendi* of grain—*kutli*, *wad*, *wang* and rice—and an adequate supply of *wakus* spirit and *lenda*. But expense is not taken into account at weddings, where open house is kept for a thousand guests if need be. 764 177 The real reason is that these Bison-horn Marias are in close contact 554 with Hinduism with its veneration of the cow; and as they raise

[see cat. 116, p. 426, — Analyst]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria



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Uragatta post, near Chitrakot Falls



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Danyakal and uraskal stones, Arampur

BISON-HORN MARIA MEMORIALS TO THE DEAD

[Facing p. 280]

FUNERAL CEREMONIES

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● 744 themselves socially they not only cease to follow old Maria customs, but begin to resent being called Marias and to claim the designation of Muria. In some places, especially in villages where it is hard to find suitable menhir stones, they erect in their stead posts of *saja* wood, which they call *wasgattia*. The upper illustration on plate XXI shows a very elaborate *wasgattia* from a roadside village near the Chitrakot falls, on the northernmost fringe of the Bison-horn country. It is carved on each of its carefully squared sides with representations of hunting scenes, and the objects of the chase. Originally these were picked out in red and blue paint. Plate XXII shows part of a large row of *wasakal* menhirs by the side of the road from Dantewara to Kameli, at the foot of the bridle-path ascending to the Bailadila guest-house; such enormous menhirs as those shown behind the women in this illustration are seldom set up in these days; the tallest shown was thirteen feet high, and the broadest over six feet wide at the base. The normal size of those nowadays erected is shown in the lower illustration on plate XXI; this portrays part of the *wasakal* of Aranpur village, by the side of the forest road from Kuakonda to Dummagudem, and at the head of the Aranpur pass. In this photograph the interesting thing is the large flat stone resting on four boulders. This is known as a *danya-hal*, and was placed there as the memorial of Biry-Marvi Hurra Wadde, who in his life-time was *perma* and *bhum-gaita* of Aranpur, as well as a *wadda*. The Biry-Marvi and the Kuhrami clans are the only two which always make *danyakal* and never set up *wasakal* stones; all the other clans, even in the Marvi and Kuhrami phratries, and including the small or Chudala Marvi clan, erect *wasakal* stones. This Aranpur *wasakal* was not restricted to the Biry-Marvi clan, although the village was founded by that clan; the *danyakal* stone on the right edge of the photograph was the last stone at the south end of the row; next to it on the north were fifteen *wasakal* stones of the Kunjami clan, and after them three of the Chudala Marvi clan. The small stones at the foot of the menhirs are known as *kanal-katul* or ghost stools, and serve the same function as the *kanal-garys* cromlechs of the Hill Marias. Any recently erected stone can usually be detected either by the presence of a cow's or pig's tail hung over its apex by a loop of cord, or by the dirty white stains of libations of *landa* poured over the stone when it was set up.

316 The stone is selected and carried from the quarry to the place where it is to be erected in much the same way as that already described for the Hill Marias. I use the word quarry advisedly, for these great slabs or pillars cannot be found as surface boulders. I have not seen the actual quarrying; but they understand how to

2 [See cat. 116, pp. 426-427. - AswA/45]

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[493]

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crack boulders by burning piles of logs on and around them, and use their iron digging-sticks as crowbars to assist the work. The stones are too heavy to be carried merely by the ends of the two long poles to which the Hill Maria lashes the short cross-pieces of wood on which the stone rests; the Bison-horn cross-pieces project beyond the stone, and on the ends they attach long loops of twisted bamboo rind, through the upper ends of which they pass cross-poles over the top of the stone, and the ends of these cross-poles, like those of the two long poles, are borne on the bearers' shoulders. The heir of the dead man has to provide food and drink for the bearers, as in the Abujmar hills. The stone is taken to the place where it is to be set up, and the heir sacrifices a cock on the other side of the road on the spot where the body was cremated, and buries it in a hole dug under the ashes.

All proceed thence to the dead man's house, and there in the *wijja-low* by the Pot of the Departed the heir sacrifices another cock to the dead man. The latter's son-in-law, or, if there is none, his *arrantogh* or some other affine, in the name of the dead man kills, with blows from the blunt head of an axe on its head, the cow or cows selected by the dead man during his lifetime; they believe that if these cows are not sacrificed in fulfilment of his wishes they pine away and die, and then the dead man is said to have come and fetched them away. Pigs are sometimes sacrificed as a substitute for or in addition to cows. The sacrificed animals are then skinned and cut up for roasting, the liver being cooked separately for the dead man. They take the liver, the tails tied to loops of cord, and a pot of *lenda* to the *waskal*, and there the affines of the dead man see to the erection of the stone. The heir hangs the tails over the top of the stone, after pouring *lenda* over it, and sometimes milk also. He then places the roasted liver on the *lenda-lenda* cromlech, and with his back turned to the menhir sacrifices a chicken and places it under the cromlech, in much the same way as the Hill Maria heir. All present fling rice, *ashti*, *wad* and *weng* at and around the menhir, and then follow the heir to the nearest pool to bathe, without looking back at the menhir. They eat the roast beef and pork of the sacrificial victims either on the banks of the pool or at the dead man's house, with boiled rice and pulses, and *lenda* and *wakas* spirit to drink. The son-in-law or other affine who beat the funeral drum is presented by the heir with a brass dish and a piece of cloth, or, more often, with the cloth only. All then disperse.

At the first Marka Pandum following this, a final offering of mangoes and grain is made to the dead man's *lenda* at his *waskal*.

In some villages a forked bough is erected instead of an *waskal* or an *wakas*. It is always cut from the sacred *saja* tree.

2 [see cat. 116, p. 427, - *Ambyet*]



Uraskal stones on Dantewara-Balladilla road
(Photograph by Baron R. von Eichstedt)

[see p. 280]

1: Grignon G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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Bison Horn Maria

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Next morning large parties of Marias and Murias came from every direction, some of the Murias from the Mardapal Pargana and the villages round Chhota Dongar. A little rain fell and there was a lot of blowing of horns. At midday the Anga and other symbols of the gods were taken down to a stream for a bathe and during the afternoon many Sirahas fell into trance and postured and danced in ecstasy. A little shrine was set up in the middle of the clearing and as more and more people arrived and other gods came to visit Usendi Pem, the Sirahas danced wildly round and round it. A procession was formed, the Anga leading it, with tall poles decorated with peacocks' feathers following, and a crowd of children carrying [534] gongs and various substitutes for gongs—bits of painted wood, the lids of old kerosene oil tins, anything that could be banged to make a noise.

Gradually the place filled up and by four o'clock there were three or four thousand people present—a small attendance, I was told. The Marias and Murias showed little interest in the shops which were mostly attended by local Hindus and officials, and there was very little drinking, though many a boy brought a gourd or a bottle of rice-beer or palm wine hanging under his arm. Then the dancing began, and hundreds of boys and girls in the full Hill Maria dancing attire (though no Hill Marias were present) and carrying decorated sticks and axes over their shoulders, formed lines and processions and great circles, until the entire ground was alive with slowly circulating movement.

As evening fell little fires sprang up under every tree where groups of people made their camps. The older people drank, cooked and gossiped with their relatives. Like all bazaars the Marhai is a great occasion for repairing friendships. During the night the boys and girls continued dancing, and from time to time the Sirahas brought out the Anga-gods and danced with them.

The moon rose at midnight and turned the scene into one of extraordinary majesty and beauty. The festival was decorous and restrained, but very happy. There was no orgy and practically no drunkenness. At dawn the dancing stopped and in a few minutes the whole great assembly melted away back into the forest.

IX

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On page 281 Grigson refers briefly to the Bison-horn Maria custom of erecting carved wooden pillars in memory of well-known or wealthy tribal leaders. There are not many of these pillars, though the custom of making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great and only the most important people are considered worthy of them.

Bison Horn Maria

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These pillars are usually erected near a highway—not necessarily a motorable one. They are usually made of the wood of *terminalia tomentosa* or *shorea robusta* and are erected with ceremonies similar to those used for a menhir. 764 [824]

As far as I know, the pillars are always made by non-aboriginals, but since the Marias give their instructions to the carpenters about the patterns they want carved, they do thus throw some light on Maria psychology even if they do not illustrate their sense of art. For example, the pillar in memory of Kopa Dhurwa at Massenar was made by Bharto, an Oriya carpenter of Jagdalpur. The pillars for Barse Marka at Barrem and for Marvi Misa at Jabeli were both made by Anda Kalar of Potali. For Barse Marka's pillar his sister's son gave a bull calf worth twenty rupees, cloth worth five rupees, two rupees in cash and daily rations for the fifteen days while the carpenter was working. 764 532 [435]

There was a fine pillar to a wealthy Maria named Muchaki Hunga near Dilmilli on the main road from Jagdalpur to Dantewara. It is a fat, thick pillar, carefully squared, standing some fifteen feet high with elaborate carvings round the base and a decoration of crocodiles and pigeons at the top. The whole is surmounted by a trident, obviously suggested by the carpenter, and on this again is a small hat. On the west face of the pillar there are carvings of dancers wearing bison horns and six girls who are realistically portrayed with breasts and genitalia. Below them is a tiger, a crane and a peacock. On the south side is a picture of the dead man riding an elephant, an umbrella in his hand and bags of money at the saddle. Five women follow him with pots of rice-beer and spoons. Below them are rats. At the foot are men ploughing, deer and tigers. On the east side is a man riding a horse and fish, horses and a tortoise. To the north is a man and wife with their children, a gourd for taking beer from a pot and representations of snakes and birds. Below this are two pairs of dogs apparently copulating, and at the very bottom some men are carrying a pot of rice-beer.

Near the pillar is a grave built up in the modern Hinduized fashion and protected by a little shed. [177]

Near Massenar, at the end of a long row of *axaxal* menhirs is the pillar in memory of the famous Kopa Dhurwa. This is much more slender than the one at Dilmilli and is not so well carved. But it has carvings of Kopa himself on his elephant with the inevitable umbrella, a gun and a tobacco pouch. On his chest is a small circle which I was told represented his Jubilee Medal. The pillar is further decorated with carvings of men dancing with the bison-horn head-dress, boys and girls dancing with a pot of rice-beer, a man trying to drag away a girl by the hand, crocodiles,

- 764
532 porcupines, peacocks, fish and tigers. The carpenter had put in a representation of Hanuman, but the Marias, knowing little of him, supposed it was a policeman included to emphasize Kopa's dignity.

The pillar also has, or had, pigeons on the top and there was a trident, though the Marias were ignorant of its meaning. 'It is the pole's turban,' they said. 'It is made of iron to save us the trouble of renewing it.'

It is obviously impossible to describe all these pillars¹; in 1942 they were to be found near Chitrakot, near Killepal, at Lalaguda, near Siriguda, at Taragaon, at Kumalnar and at Garda. I saw a very simple one at Chingner in honour of an important member of the Lekhami clan. It was standing out in the jungle by itself; there were three rows of lozenges cut in the wood near the top and a single carved pigeon above. It was still red with oil mixed with *gervu*. At its foot was a flat stone supported on two others, the *Awal-garys*. From the top there hung a strip of cloth, possibly a bit of the dead man's dancing dress.

[171] It is important to note that these pillars are closely associated with the megalithic culture of the Marias. Sometimes both a menhir and pillar are erected for the same man; sometimes the pillar stands at the end of a row of stone monuments. It is not, therefore, in any sense a substitute for the *waskal* but a supplement to it. I have noticed a similar combination of stone and wooden monuments among the Lanjhia Sacras who have come under Kond influence.

It is tempting to suppose that the various animals and birds carved on the pillar have some totemic significance, but I doubt if this is so. In the first place, every pillar has a wide variety of animals portrayed upon it; in the second the people themselves say that these animals simply represent the ordinary objects of the chase and are carved to indicate some of the interests of the dead man. Each pillar in fact attempts to be a biography in wood of the deceased.

114 These notes are desultory enough, but they do at least give me an opportunity of paying some tribute to the man whose endless docility to facts has enabled him to make so striking a contribution to science and whose great-hearted affection for the aboriginals has led him to propose a policy and establish principles which, if adopted by the National Governments of the future, will preserve freedom and happiness in the hills and forests of India. There is much that is tedious in anthropology, much that hardly seems worth while,

¹ The pillar of Marvi Oyama Mass, the homicide, is described in detail in *Maria Murder and Suicide*, p. 201.

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he would repay with 50 per cent. interest.¹ Although it is clear that these Teli, Kalar and Telugu money-lenders do levy an exorbitant toll on the Maria villagers' produce, it is equally clear that they are fulfilling a necessary function, which has become the more necessary since the stopping of *podu* or *jalepu* cultivation below the hills has restricted the Marias in most villages to permanent rice cultivation on small acreages always dependent on seasonal rainfall evenly distributed in time. If such money-lenders are excluded, then they must be replaced by Government grain depots and village grain banks.

Of Maria funeral rites the *Gazetteer* observes that a stone or a carved post about five feet high is usually put up to mark the spot where a man's body has been cremated, and that 'sometimes one comes across a forest glade strewn with these memorials, the only sign of some deserted village, the very name of which has perished'.² Many rows of carved wooden posts may be seen between Bhamragarh and Lahiri, while at Lahiri itself I saw scores of such posts and of the small *crumlechs* (*kanal-garya* or 'thrones of the Departed') described on page 273, and mentioned in the *Gazetteer*³ as built on the spot where the body was burned. The top of one of these very substantial funerary posts, or *kanal-garia*, photographed at Lahiri, is reproduced as one of the illustrations in this Supplement. Noticeable are the carved wooden horns, between which is a carved wooden bird, probably a hornbill. The wooden horns are common, and probably are a modern symbol of the cow formerly sacrificed at the erection of a *manhir* or wooden *kanal-garia* by Hill Marias⁴ and Bison-horn Marias⁵ throughout Bastar: the funerary customs of the Chanda Marias seemed, however, to be Hill Maria in type, and this was confirmed by oral enquiries at Lahiri.

The addition of the Bison-horn Marias and of the Kutru Hill Marias of Bastar to cock-fighting has been described on page 162. I particularly inquired if the weekly cock-fights at Oikal in Ahiri *samindari*, there mentioned, and at Lahiri itself still went on. But all cock-fighting among Chanda Marias had for some years been stopped under orders from an inexperienced young European District Superintendent of Police on the theory that it contravened the Gambling Act. But the Marias maintained that, as in Bastar, so here, there had never been cash betting (as, indeed, one might expect in a region where all transactions are still so largely in kind), but the defeated bird had passed to the owner of the winning bird.

¹ For further details, see *The Aboriginal Problem*, pp. 183-4.

² *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1900), p. 106.

³ *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

⁴ See pp. 278-9.

⁵ See p. 281.

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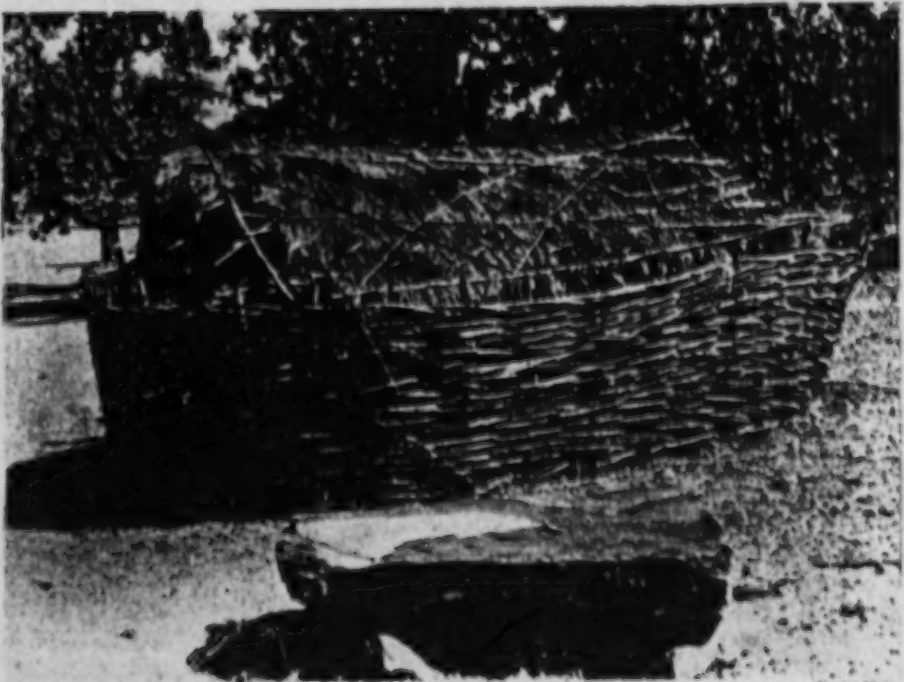
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1: Grgison G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Eison Horn Maria

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Horn-hora tomb with danyakal stone in front, at Palmar

(Veron Photo)

[End Plate T]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

AW32 Gond AW32

Hill Maria

Bison Horn Maria

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[W. V. Grigson]

The top of a Maria funerary post (*khasal golia*)
at Lahiri, Chanda district

[End Plate 4]

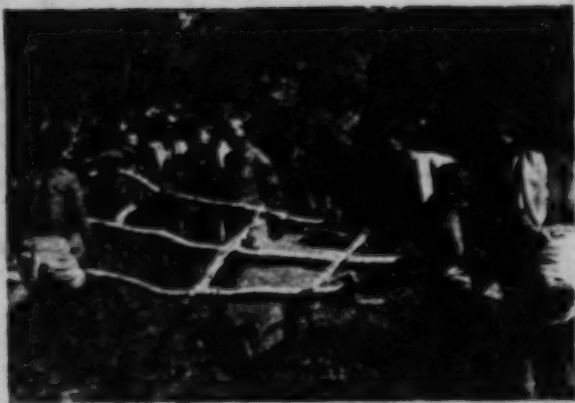
1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

AW32 Gond AW32

Hill Maria

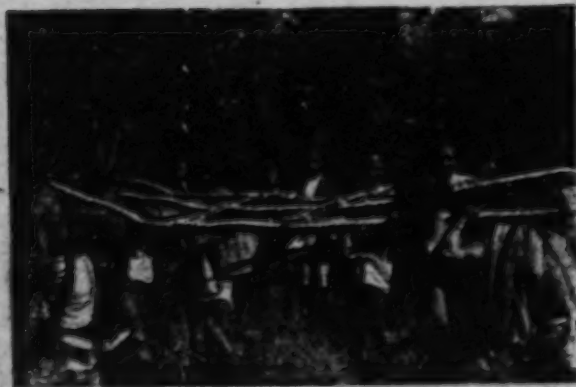
Bison Horn Maria

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[Verrier Photo]

Scenes at the erection of a menhir at Mananar



[Verrier Photo]

[End Plate V]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

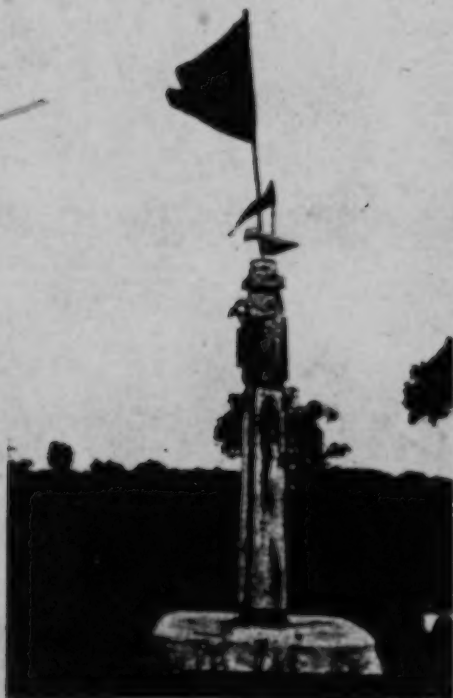
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Hill Maria

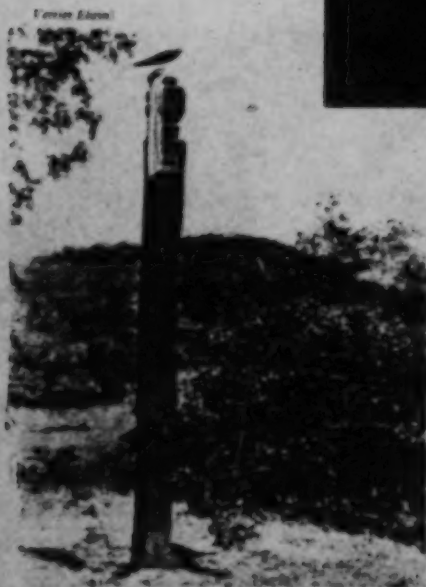
Bison Horn Maria

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Memorial pillar
at Base Asper



(Verrier Photo)



Memorial pillar (for members of
the Lekhami clan) near Chinger.
Note the crosshatch at the base

[End plate W]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

AW32 Gond AW32

Hill Maria

Bison Horn Maria

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Memorial pillar for Marie Maria at Barrow

[From East]

[End Plate X]

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: AGE

sometimes grows properly and sometimes falls, so a child may die or rust or wither for lack of rain and so die in the womb.

The Muria do not hide the facts of death from their children or restrain them from witnessing the gloomy rites by which they dispose of their dead. Indeed, as at marriages, chelik and motiari have their special duties at a funeral. The chelik generally carry the corpse out to the place of disposal; the motiari accompany them there and afterwards make leaf-plates and cups for the funeral feast. If a pregnant woman or a mother with a very young baby dies, only the chelik may take the body out beyond a stream and dispose of it.

All over India it is believed that those who die unmarried turn into unsatisfied and petulant demons. They have been frustrated in obtaining the love-liest things in life and for all time they are miserable. It is curious that it is not usually virginity but the fact that the dead boy or girl has not passed through the marriage ceremony that matters. A married boy who has not consummated the marriage is said to live in some saja tree on his property to protect it. Women may go near, but not menstruous or pregnant women or their husbands. The Muria take special precautions when a chelik or motiari dies. The Gaita drives nails into the four corners of the grave and the ghotul members make a special offering to the ghost begging it not to trouble them. In some villages it is believed that the ghost of a motiari lives under a mahua tree and the cooking for the funeral feast therefore is done in its shade. In Padpera, the Muria believe that when a motiari dies she becomes a Mirchuk and lives in a pipal tree, and a chelik becomes a Matia and lives in a banyan. The usual Gondi word for the ghost of a motiari is Nelang-jural; occasionally she occupies an old ant-hill. Very young children live in a banyan and drink its milky sap. In Bakulwahi twelve years ago a motiari died and the Gaita drove nails into the four corners of the ghotul building and went round it with the chelik in procession in order to protect it against ghostly invasion. They sacrificed a pig saying, 'Are you going to stay here, or will you go away?' When the pig ate the rice which was as usual offered to it the Muria understood that the motiari was ready to go away. They carried the pig to the boundary of the village and killed it there and thus freed the ghotul from any danger from the ghost of that girl. In Palari the Muria said that when a chelik was killed by a tiger he turned into a Baghmeri-bhut. When he died of ordinary illness he became a Kuara-bhut, revealing his presence in a whirlwind. When a very young chelik died he became an Arajatta-bhut and entered into people's stomachs, giving them a lot of pain. In Palmar the ghost of the chelik or motiari attacks whichever member of the ghotul is the first to get married after the death, presumably out of jealousy. When the Mircha diagnoses what is the matter he offers the usual sacrifices and, making a little man out of straw, asks the bhut to leave its victim and possess the straw-man instead. This is then carried to the boundary of the village and thrown away. Where a chelik or motiari has died in a village during the previous year, on the eve of any wedding the Gaita goes to a small date palm and ties it round and round with string saying, 'Go away from here, don't come near the boundary of our village'. He puts a large stone on the tree and the wedding can take place in safety. After the wedding he removes the stone, unties the string and offers an egg and chicken.

In Kabonga it was said that when a chelik or motiari died, the ghost became what they called an Uriya-bhut. But they said that there was nothing very dangerous about it. 'The Uriya-bhut plays and dances just like the chelik and motiari. In fun it throws leaves and dust into the air; it blows in people's

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947

AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate XXXI

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The dead man's daughter-in-law
throws rice over the bier

Memorial menhirs
near Khutgaon



[p. 144 (W)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate XXXIV



Tomb at Gudripara



Small shrine in front
of the Gudripara tomb

Son and grandson offer liquor
at a father's tomb at Phander



[p. 144 (D)]

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to its prey, to protect the boys and girls going out on dancing expeditions, to ensure that the drum gives its accustomed thunder. Life and death are then united by these beliefs and rites, and the whole of existence is seen as a single sequence where physical death is but an incident which in no way disturbs the continuity of interest or relationship.

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V. FUNERARY RITES

In the west, Muria death customs are dominated by Hill Maria influence. In Amgaon, the Jhoria Muria said that their funerary rites were 'things of the Maria Raj'. As we move east, where the Muria population probably represents an earlier Gond immigration from the north, customs are not unlike those typical of the Gond of the Central Provinces. The north-east of Bastar, however, has been more open to Hindu influence and it is not always easy to tell what the original traditions were.

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The Muria bury important people, little children, chelik and motiari, and the victims of small-pox. They cremate all others. They lay the corpse, whether of man or woman, on its back with the head to the east. At Padbera, the Gaits said, 'It is because we came from the east. East is "up" and west is "down".'

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Members of each clan and either sex are disposed in separate places. Those who die from unusual causes are taken far away into the jungle. In Palari I was told that the remains of a tiger's victim should be burnt on the actual scene of death. Usually the corpse is placed under a mahua tree.

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I will first describe one of the several funerals that I have witnessed, and then give any variations that I have recorded elsewhere.

On the night of 8 December 1940, in Bauri, a village of the Abujmar foothills, a woman of about forty years named Dhako, the wife of Genjru of the Wadder clan, died and was carried home on a rough litter to her husband's house at Amgaon. She had died of 'a watery swelling of the body', perhaps dropsy, which is generally regarded as a punishment for adultery. The people were very reticent about speaking of the cause of her death and I never was able to hear the real story.

Since it is taboo for a woman to sleep on a cot, Dhako died on the ground and was again laid on the floor of her own house covered with a sheet. Many women, assembled in the house and outside in the street, wailed loudly from time to time. Gradually the relatives gathered and, when all were there, the corpse was carried out on a bamboo mat into the courtyard. Six women sat round weeping. An old woman of the Wadder clan (which can marry with the Partabi clan to which the dead woman originally belonged), but not a member of the family, now tied a little rice and a cowrie in knots on either side of the cloth. There were three knots on each side joined by a thread which ran criss-cross over the body. They did not bathe the corpse nor close the eyes, but the woman's little daughter, a child about five years old, put haldi on her mother's face, and the other female relatives present did the same.

Meanwhile a group of chelik, most of whom were related to Genjru, were busy making a sort of ladder to serve as bier. This they covered with dry grass. The corpse was lifted out and placed upon it. The chelik took it on their shoulders and went into the jungle followed by both men and women. Genjru's younger sister followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice over it. Another woman carried a basket containing three different roots and bits of haldi.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

764 The Muria cremate the bodies of those who die of yaws, leprosy and dropsy, so a party of chelik went ahead to prepare the pyre. When the bearers reached the place, which was in thick jungle, on the far side of a stream, away from the usual crematorium, they carried the corpse round the pyre, which was below a great mahua tree, three times anti-clockwise, and then laid it on the ground to the south-west of the pyre with the feet to the west.

Each of the relatives present came forward and laid a small piece of cloth on the body. Dhako's father-in-law (a father-in-law or an elder brother is often the chief actor at a funeral) poured out some mahua spirit by the head of the corpse saying, 'Today accept this from our hands; after today how will you get it again?' They then removed most of the clothes, but tied one piece to a branch of the mahua tree. The rest they took home to distribute among the children.

The chelik lifted the corpse on to the pyre and the old Wadder woman placed a little earth on saja leaves at either side of the head. She took a stone and broke Dhako's bangles 'for now she is separated from her husband, she is a widow'. They put a little jawa-gruel and water by the head, leaving the pot there. The chelik piled wood and dry grass round the pyre, but none was actually laid on the body. They rested the bier against the pile of wood and one of the boys broke it with his axe, then struck the ground all round—to represent the driving of nails 'to close the house' and prevent the ghost walking, and then two of them threw the axe to and fro over the pyre three times.

Now the same chelik who had carried the bier lit bundles of grass from a coil of paddy-straw rope which had been brought slowly smouldering from the hearth of Genjru's house, and ran quickly two by two round the pyre in opposite directions kindling the dry grass. The flames shot up and the women broke into a loud and moving lamentation. The men threw twigs (of any tree) onto the burning corpse, muttering, 'God to whom we vowed gifts has failed us. Let him take these twigs instead, for it's all he'll get'.

The people stayed for a while, some of them looking up fearfully at the smoke to see if it would go straight into the air or no, then returned slowly and sorrowfully to Genjru's house. The father-in-law met us and distributed oil which was rubbed on face, hands and legs instead of a bath. He gave tobacco and liquor to those who had brought pieces of cloth to cover the corpse, but not to others. The people then slowly and quietly dispersed.

When the corpse is buried, similar customs are observed. On 12 November 1941 I attended the funeral of Bhaira, a middle-aged man of the Halami clan, at Gorma. Here the bier was covered with plantain leaves¹ and the corpse bound firmly to it with cord. Here it was the dead man's daughter-in-law who, with hair untied, followed the bier. When they reached the grave, which was about five feet deep, the village Siraha put a little cow-dung at the bottom, placed plantain leaves above and on the leaves some sticks. After the corpse had been lowered into the cavity, it was covered with plantain leaves, and the Gaita let a few drops of liquor fall by its head saying, 'When you were alive, I could give you nothing, but at least take this now'. After the grave had been filled in, large stones were placed upon the mound. The men went to bathe, but the women remained. The widow brought a pot containing all that was left of the food that had been cooked for the dead man on the day of his death, and emptied it near the grave. She was persuaded by the other women to sit down above her husband's

[57] ¹ Plantain leaves, which are sacred to the Hindus, are regarded as unlucky by the Muria because of their use in funerals.

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head. Weeping bitterly, she cried, 'All these days you were with me. Now you have left your wife and gone away. So take your bangles, I don't want them any more'. She broke the bangles and threw them on the grave. 764●

In Amgaon the rite of the dead fish was omitted, probably because no fish were available. But in Gorma, when oil was given to the guests for their purification, they were also offered a small dead dry fish floating in oil. They had to touch this and make a mark on the Gaita's forehead with a drop of oil; he did the same for each of the guests.

Ceremonies vary considerably according to the age and status of the deceased. Thus when a young bride died at Temrugaon on 22 March 1941, it was the chelik who took a leading part in the ceremonies and some of them made a pathetic reference to her youth of happiness in the ghotul. Here it was three women, the girl's mother and two sisters, who poured liquor, not onto the ground, but into the corpse's mouth. Three chelik broke the bangles: each placed one hand on a stone and their leader smashed the bangles. Most of the other ornaments were removed and distributed as gifts to the motiari. But the wooden square, round which a Muria girl's hair is tied, was placed in the grave above her head along with the broken bangles and one necklace. After the earth had been filled in, the women poured a little oil and some gnel from a gourd onto the head of the grave.

The sense of outrage, the feeling that something has gone wrong, that the magicians have failed and the gods have 'let them down' is almost as marked as the deep and genuine grief of the mourners. We have already noticed how they said at Amgaon, 'God to whom we vowed gifts has failed us'. At Gorma the family had promised a goat to Gondin Pen, a pig to Tallur Muttai, another pig to the Ran and a chicken and coconut to the Departed. At the funeral, just before the grave was filled in, the dead man's son stood by the head of the grave and broke a small stick into five pieces. He threw one piece into the grave and said, 'I promised Gondin Pen a goat if you lived. But you died and this is all she'll get'. He threw the second piece and said, 'I promised Tallur Muttai a pig if you lived. But you died and this is all she'll get'. And so on. At Temrugaon the husband and father of the dead girl stood at the head of the grave holding seven saja twigs. The others present said to the husband, 'If she were alive, what would you give?' He replied, 'A goat, a pig, a hen' and so on, and at each answer threw one of the twigs into the grave.

When an old and distinguished Muria dies the ceremonies are more elaborate. The body is carried out to burial with singing and dancing. An *ahomāma* relative beats the *Adhur-dhol* (death-drum) to summon the relatives and then goes dancing and beating his drum before the bier, singing, 'O dead man, now you are sleeping with your feet turned up, and your penis is pointing to the sky'. It is one of the social duties of the chelik and motiari to attend such funerals and escort the bier. I have recorded one of the Gondī songs that are sung on such occasions.

Chelo dāda rā ro le.

Al ai ai ai!

Ora hara rājāl ra?

Māma yāu rājāl ra.

Dari dāpta dātor ra.

Dari dāpta gajur ra.

Come, brothers, come.

Al ai ai ai!

Who is this Raja?

It is our Raja.

The Raja passes through the Under World.

There is a great noise in the Under World.

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Manjhar te chinu ra.
Porro dipte chinu ra.
Rājān gise os mail ra.
Bāra dindora aita ra.

Warūt dādi warūt ra.
Hajār muli girh lu ra.
Adu bādu hoda ra?
Bagri māro hoda ra.
Tānūg hālku itek ra?
Ai hālku na hoda ra.
Tāna talla itek ra?
Nālūg talla na hoda ra.
Sono tāye kharau ra.
Kharau gise hector ra.
Hira tāye lagām ra.
Lagām poyri auditor ra.

Perke muney māncy ra.
Odāng odāng pulut ra.
Koda chhūte mālā ra.
Adu bādu mālāl ra?
Mālāl porro bairag ra.
Chāron kotunj te bairag ra.
Nao khānd ta mālāl ra.

Mālāl lepa jhulna ra;
Sono tāye jhulna ra.
Hira tāye gādā ra.
Gādāi sope hewit ra.
Mālāl sope hewit ra.
Johār bhetu hewit ra.
Dāt ra dādi dētū ra.
Ai ai ai ai!

In this very interesting song, the horse Bagri Maro is, of course, the bier and its four bearers. The men and police on every side are the escorting chelik. The palace is the grave and the tomb that is usually built above it for an important man. The flags are the bits of cloth tied to overhanging trees or attached to the tomb itself. The throne is made of sticks and leaves on which the corpse is laid.

I also have a lengthy and very coarse song sung by the mourners as they go down to the stream to bathe after disposing of the corpse. I will give the first fifteen lines.

Chole dāda ro ro la.
Ai ai ai ai!
Dātu ra dādi dātu ra,
Yeru miyāla dātu ra,
Ghātum tehe veyi ra,
Samund tehe yer miyil ra.
Adu bādu rāni ra?
Ade rājona rāni were ra.

In the Middle World is silence.
In the Upper World is silence.
Let us take the Raja home.
Twelve times have the folk been called.

Come, brothers, come.
A thousand men have gathered.
What horse is this?
It is the horse Bagri Maro.
What should we say of its legs?
This horse has eight legs.
What should we say of its heads?
This horse has four heads.
It has golden shoes.
It has to wear these shoes.
It has a diamond bridle.
Catch the bridle and mount the horse.

There are men before and behind.
There are police on either side.
The horse begins to run.
What is this palace?
Above the palace flies a flag.
On its four sides are flags.
There are nine quarters of the palace.
Inside there is a swing;
The swing is made of gold.
The throne is made of diamonds.
Give him the throne.
Give him the palace.
Greet him with Johar.
Come away, brothers, come away.
Ai ai ai ai!

Come, brothers, come.
Ai ai ai ai!
Let us now go hence,
Let us go to bathe in the stream,
Let us go to the bathing-place,
Let us bathe in the ocean.
What Rani is this?
This is the Rani of that Raja.

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Angar mute rūni ra.
Yer miyāḥ hilanda ra.

Jāḥro jāḥro hilanda ra.
Pāḥmaro dhōti ra!
Dhōti tunc kāranda ra.
Tāna dādang āḥa ra?
Māḥka hāyāṅ āḥa ra.
Gāḥtem tikhāda wāḥdang ra.

Lone tike handang ra
Mui gāḥka māia ra
Suḥa buḥa hile ra.

Angar Mute is the Rani.
Weeping, she is bathing in the water.

As she weeps the tears fall.
O her silken cloth!
She looks at her cloth.
How can we describe her breasts?
Her breasts are as the bel fruit.
From the bathing-place she is coming home.

In the house
There are so many relatives
That we cannot count them.

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The rest of the song describes Angar Mute's court, to which comes the Pargana Manjhi with small legs, his spear over his shoulder, a big-bellied Kotwar and many other officials. The Manjhi delivers judgement, giving a hundred rupees to the Raja and only a pair of bullocks for the Muria. 'One of the bullocks had no tail, the other had no horns.' Then the chelik and motiari who have escorted the corpse to the burial ground are described. There are sixty boys led by Kosi Leyur and sixty girls led by Gara Karre Mode, the Belowa of the ghotul, whose vagina is sixteen cubits long and whose pubic hairs are five cubits long. 'A jungle boar could roll in her vagina.' The boys break her bangles and push the pieces into her navel with a *jharar* noise.

All this, which seems merely coarse to us, is exceedingly amusing to the Muria; the song is really a comic effort intended to relieve the tension of the funeral now that the main rites are done.

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VI. DIVINING THE CAUSE OF DEATH

It is always important at a funeral to discover the cause of so monstrous and unnatural a thing as death. At Binjhli, when magic is suspected, they halt the bier before it reaches the burial ground and the Siraha medium recites a string of names of suspected persons. When the name of the guilty man is mentioned, the bier moves forward violently of its own accord. This method, which resembles the use of an Anga clan-god for divination, is common throughout the State, and Grigson has recorded a similar, though more elaborate, rite in use among the Hill Maria.¹

At Kehalakot, the Muria remove some locks of the dead man's hair and a little earth from beneath his head. They make a small flag-pole with the hair and the earth and a *mja* leaf stuck on an ebony stick. They take this to the jungle and a boy holds it while the Siraha recites the names of any suspected causes or people. When the right word is uttered, the flag is said to quiver. At Kehari the villagers go to the boundary and put five heaps of rice in a row, one for Mahapurah, one for witchcraft, one for Mother Earth, one for the ancestors of the house, and one for any local godling who may have been troublesome. The people sit some distance away, and spend the time having their hair done by their relatives-in-law. Presently a crow flies down and pecks at one or other of the piles of rice, thus revealing the cause of death.

The *shashakari* divination is done with chickens on the second or third day after death. One chicken is taken from the house of the dead and one from

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¹ Grigson, op. cit., p. 371.

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778 members of the clan should be erected, if possible, in its neighbourhood. At
 776 Phunder there is a bamboo bundle containing a small earthen pot hanging
 614 above the Anga of the Maravi clan. When any Maravi dies his relatives carry
 544 his *jiva* there, open the bamboo bundle and sacrifice a chicken above it, allowing
 the blood to fall into the pot. This means that the soul of the dead man will
 henceforth live in the pot hanging above his clan-god.

Another important function of the Anga is to serve as a means of detecting
 776 witches, breach of tribal taboo, theft or even to discover loss of property. At
 718 the end of 1940 I witnessed an interesting witch-hunt at Palki in the Narayanpur
 754 Tahsil.

On 16 November 1940, Aitu, the Muria headman of Palki, bought eight
 annas worth of Court Fee stamps and affixed them to an application to the
 Tahsildar of Kondagaon, complaining that in his village the animals were
 dying, people were falling sick and crops were failing, and asking for the
 services of the Anga Deo at Bara Dongar to discover what witch, magician
 or malignant ghost or deity was responsible. On his paying five rupees
 into the Treasury the Tahsildar issued *pardas* instructing the priest in
 charge of the god to take it to Palki (but to no other village) in order to
 discover and thus cure the trouble.

On the 18th, Aitu reached the shrine at Bara Dongar, and almost immediately
 the party set out. There was Deo Singh, the hereditary Halba priest of the
 god, four Muria bearers to carry it and a 'Dhurwa' priest, a Muria specially
 attached to the god's service. In two days they reached Palki and camped
 in a little shed of branches outside the village, placing the god on a rough bed
 of logs and branches in a separate hut.

There Deo Singh told me about this famous Anga. His name was
 Narsingnath Deo and he was born at Angason in the Chota Dongar Pargana.
 His father was Merg Raj, who now lives at Paralkot, his mother Devali Dokari
 of Antagarh. His younger brother is the Pat Deo who now lives at Jagdalpur
 and was taken there in the time of Raja Bhairon Deo to hunt witches. Here,
 of course, Deo Singh was talking in theological language: actually the Raja,
 hearing of the fame of the Anga in the wilds, had a copy made and installed
 in the palace at Jagdalpur. For some time the custom was to bring the original
 god from Jagdalpur and send the copy to take its place; but in time this custom
 was dropped and today the Anga in the palace acts independently of its
 prototype.

Raja Bhairon Deo, continued my informant, at one time had both Anga
 at Jagdalpur. There was a great epidemic, and none of the gods was able to
 help, so the Raja ordered them all to be thrown into the Indrawati river. But
 only Anga Deo and his young brother Pat Deo floated on the surface and
 drifted to the shore. This made them very famous, but the Raja felt that it
 was wrong to keep two such gods in Jagdalpur and he sent the Anga Narsingnath
 to Bara Dongar, where he has since resided.¹

This Anga is made of bel wood. Every three generations it is remade.
 It is decorated with a silver snake and a sun and moon is silver. The old
 worn-out images are thrown into a deep pond at Angason.

On the 20th of November the witch hunt at Palki began. It was only
 with great difficulty that I was able to be present, for the villagers concealed
 both the time and place of the ceremony, and in fact were sending me off in the

¹ For another account see W. V. Geigun's Introduction to my *Maria Murder and Suicide* (1943), pp. x f. According to Geigun's information the Jagdalpur god was copied from the Narayanpur god.

127 these were not kept at the headquarters of the State, but
121 distributed in the police stations and many of them had been
eliminated. But the State Superintendent of Police called
in as many aboriginal files as could be found, and again
after much sifting I found myself with exactly 50 unselected
Bison-horn Maria suicide records. These extended over a
period of 10 years.

114 Between 1935 and 1942 I made many tours in this enchant-
ing land among these enchanting people. On the earlier
tours I was accompanied by my friend Mr Shamreo Hivale
whose amazing sympathy and insight helped me to catch
my first vision of Maria culture. Later I had the support
of my wife who, being herself a Gond, was able to get quickly
in touch with the people and immediately established a
friendly atmosphere. Particularly in the later tours I tried
to see as many scenes of violence as possible, to talk to
released convicts and to discover the general attitude of a
village towards any crime that had been committed within
its boundaries. In Aranpur I stood beside the still warm
ashes of the ritually-cremated clothes of Barse Chewa who
had recently been hanged in jail. At Khutepal, I watched
Oyami Masa's children playing on the very floor once stained
by the blood of his murdered wife. In the forest near Jabali
[211] I had a clearing made so that I could photograph the carved
pillar erected in memory of a famous murderer. In Rewali I
was visited by a ferocious-looking youth who had twice stood
on trial for his life and had twice preserved it. Here too I
talked with Hemla Bakka who killed his wife for infidelity
and was now unable to get another. In Deriras I saw the
grave of the murdered Boti which had been desecrated by
● [764] Ghania for the sake of the purse of money which had been
buried to help the dead man on his journey to the other
world. In the same village I visited the home of Kawai
Berga then serving a life sentence, and talked to his fine sons
and his sad pathetic wife.

124 Later I spent many hours in the Jagdalpur Jail talking to
Maria who were serving terms of life-imprisonment for
homicide. Some of them were as informative as the limits
of their psychology allowed, for it must always be remem-
bered that aboriginals are not accustomed to discussing those
matters which are of special interest to anthropologists. Other

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times in a little house of their own, sometimes in a room lent to them by an old widow. Where there is a separate hut, this is sometimes also used for the segregation of menstruating women. In a few places there are special buildings for this purpose. The houses of the headmen are not built in any special position, but those of the Siraha medicine-men can generally be distinguished by the little huts for patients which are built round them. On the outskirts of the village will be found the shrine of the Village Mother, and in a grove nearby there may be the temple of one of the clan-gods. Beyond is the village burial place and cremation ground. Rows of menhirs in memory of the Dead may be seen in the majority of villages.

There is no standard pattern for the Maria house any more than there is for the Maria village. Most of the houses consist of three rooms, each a separate building with eaves at



DETAIL

Maria woman's
dancing-stick
(3½' long)

different levels, which make them look, as Grigson says, 'like card houses'. The first room, which is really a built-in verandah, is the kitchen. It leads into a bedroom and this in turn opens into an inner and secret room mostly occupied by a platform for storing grain and other possessions; in one corner is the Pot of the Departed about which centres the Maria cult of the Ancestors. Frequently two or more such houses are built round a courtyard, part of which is occupied by a more or less open building where people sit to talk and work.

The houses are generally clean and pleasant, but littered with a great variety of domestic and agricultural impedimenta. Outside are the pig-styes and cattle-sheds.

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indicate their will to the living through the Siraha or Waddai 769 and by appearing to them in dreams, and it is considered 775 highly dangerous to ignore their behests.

The necessity for their propitiation has affected every aspect 769 of Maria life. Offerings are made to them at every festival and at every domestic or village ceremony. They are remembered as a matter of routine in every magic formula along with the Earth Mother, Danteshwari and other deities. A few drops of liquor are offered to them every time a Maria drinks. Fire from the hearth of the Pot of the Departed in the Gaita's house is used to light the first fire in the forest clearings and the sacred fires at festivals. The importance of the Ancestors, who remain as a sort of conservative society to safeguard the traditions of the tribe, will appear throughout this book and need not be elaborated now.

VII

Women dying in pregnancy or child-birth are buried, so are 764 the victims of small-pox and of such other diseases as the 766 Siraha may from time to time direct. All others are cremated, a fact which often makes police investigation difficult and even impossible.

At one time (I am not sure how far the custom survives) 766 the Waddai was buried naked and in an upright posture. The first child of a house, if it dies under five years old, is buried in the same erect posture, with face to the east—as [787] there is light there, and beneath a mahua tree—for it is fertile of flowers and fruit, a good omen for the family.

In a funeral the chief actors are the Hanagunda or Hanal-764 gaita, who is the master of ceremonies, and the sister's son or son-in-law of the deceased. The Hanagunda has to tie a thread round the corpse and hang the cow's-tail on the moshir. It is his wife's duty to wash the body, and to take cooked rice and haldi to the pyre. The sister's son has to climb on the roof to beat a drum to summon the relatives: he sits on the unshak while it is being carried to its place; he makes the appointed offerings before the stone: he kills the sacrificial and fatal cow.

After death the dead man is laid with his head to the east in the living room of his house. His sister's son takes a stick

- 764 and measures straight upwards from the corpse's chest to the roof, poking the stick through the thatch. Then he climbs up to the roof and makes a hole which is intended symbolically to allow the message of death to spread out through the world. He puts his dhol drum above the hole, waves a stick thrice round his head and then beats his drum with the rhythm *dung dung-dung*. He beats with one hand, though the normal method is to beat with two. After the drumming has continued for a while, he comes down from the roof and continues it on the ground.

The Hanagunda's wife now husks some rice, makes it into four packets with leaves and ties two of these under the arms of the corpse and two at its waist. She applies to the chest black dust from the bottom of one of the cooking utensils so that they may be able to recognize him when he is reborn. The grand-daughter of the dead man, if available, or some girl in the same relationship, passes a string seven times round his three middle fingers and middle toes, again with the intention of ensuring his return.

It will be most convenient if I describe the actual course of a ceremony which occurred at Penta on 10 February 1942. This funeral is of special interest as the mourners had reason to believe that the dead man was the victim of black magic.

Sori Kosa of Penta had a love affair with the daughter-in-law of Markami Bando which resulted in a serious quarrel between the two families. Kosa's father paid the necessary fine and a special ceremony of peace and friendship was performed. But Bando was not really reconciled—and soon trouble began for Kosa's family. His son by his first wife died; shortly afterwards another of his sons died. One day Bando spat on Kosa's father in the bazaar. A week later the old man fell ill and died. Kosa's wife and daughter were also taken ill but recovered. The villagers whispered that this [15] was due to Bando's magic, and described how he had made a small doll of earth, wrapped it up in a leaf-cup and carried it away into the jungle. But there was no case for police interference, and the villagers proceeded with the funeral for Kosa's father.

After the preliminary rites that I have already described, all Kosa's father's relatives assembled. The women brought

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brass rings and beads and placed them on the corpse; the men brought bits of cloth. The members of the household fasted from the time of the old man's death until he was cremated. The ceremonies were marked by violent manifestations of grief. When the bamboo bier was brought to the house, the wives of the Waddai, Gaita and Hanagunda fell upon it and lay there. They said that this meant that they too wanted to be taken out and burnt, a curious echo of the Sati tradition. Straw was spread on the bier and when the corpse had been placed there, bits of cloth were laid on it by the male relatives present. The women gathered round the corpse again, kissing it and weeping bitterly. It had been lying with its legs towards the door of the house, but now it was lifted up by the bearers and its position changed so that the head was pointing to the door. They touched the door thrice with it saying, 'You made this house, come here again in your next birth'.

Then, led by the drummers, the corpse was carried out to the cremation-ground. The grand-daughter with her hair undone followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice upon it as she went along. As they passed a path that crossed theirs, they dropped a little rice so that if any other ghost came he would eat it and go away. Everyone went to the funeral. Menstruating women are not normally allowed to attend, though sometimes they may come if they stand at a little distance.

When the party reached the pyre, they went round it anti-clockwise once and placed the bier on the ground. Once again the women fell upon the corpse weeping and kissing it. They lay down beside the pyre and had to be pushed away before the business of the funeral could proceed.

Then one of the women put a little tobacco in the mouth of the corpse. The body was placed upon the pyre. Some of the bits of cloth with which it was covered were left there; the rest was distributed between the drummers and the relatives by marriage. The Hanagunda removed the packets of rice which had been tied to the waist of the corpse and threw them to left and right. The body was entirely covered with a cloth and the Hanagunda ripped this open just over the mouth. A piece of grass which had been brought from the roof of the house was put into the mouth of the corpse and

● 764 then thrown aside. It is very important that this grass should not be burnt. The aim of the rite was to ensure that the [194] man would be able to breathe on his journey to the next world, though other informants said that it was to allow the soul to escape. The brother-in-law of the dead man then lit a bundle of grass with fire brought from the house and after taking a turn round the pyre set fire to the pile of wood by the head. Another man went round in the opposite direction and fired the wood by the legs.

After the pyre was well alight, the whole company went to a stream and washed themselves. The grand-daughter soaked part of her sari in water and holding the wet portion in her hand came home and rinsed it out on the very place where the coffin had lain inside the house so that the dead man could drink it.

Early next morning, the dead man's son-in-law went to the cremation-ground to examine the ashes and there found an [754] earthen doll tied in a leaf-cup. This led the Waddai to declare that the death was due to black magic done by Bando and concealed by him in the jungle.

Later in the morning a cow was brought and its legs washed by the deceased's daughter-in-law. After touching its forehead with a little rice she said to it, 'We have given you your share, now don't make us suffer any longer'. One of the drum-beaters touched the cow with his stick and a marriage-relative killed it by a heavy blow with the blunt end of his axe. He then cut the tail, removed the liver and made it into twenty-four pieces in equal shares of six pieces each. Each share was wrapped up in a leaf and roasted. The party took these to the cremation-ground. On reaching the place some of the women picked out the bones from the pyre and kissed them. The dead man's son collected any half-burnt pieces of wood and kicked them towards the centre of the pyre. Then they cleared the ash where the corpse's head had been, cow-dunged the place and put the leaf-cups there.

The packets containing the liver were now opened and three pieces from each packet were placed on the ground and three in each of the leaf-cups. The twelve pieces on the ground were for the Earth and the twelve pieces in the leaf-cups for the Dead. The Waddai made seven piles of rice. He held a

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piece of wood in his hand and lifting it over each pile several 764
times from right to left uttered charms calling on the soul
of the deceased to be content. The dead man's son brought
a chicken and made it eat the rice, going from right to left
three times. The Waddai passed his stick quickly over the
chicken each time. However, when the fowl was eating the [777]
rice, it did not follow the proper order, but started to eat the
sixth pile after the fourth. The Waddai declared that this
was because two persons were involved in the fatal magic.
After this had been done three times, the dead man's son
passed the chicken between his legs backwards and twisted
its neck till it was severed from the trunk. This he threw
behind him, holding the head in his hands. He ripped open
the head by cutting it through the beak and threw it into the
fire. If this was not done, the head might turn into what is [25]
called in Gondi *vispitte* (a kind of bird which is known as
jiv chirai in Hindi) and if this came to the village and called
'jiv, jiv' the people would die.

They then dug a hole in the earth close to the leaf-cups with
a knife and placed a forked saja stick there. The dead man's
son stood in front of the stick with his back to it, holding the
cow's tail in his hand. He pointed it first at the sun, then to
the four corners of the world and lastly to the place where the
dead body had been cremated. He did this thrice and then
'tied the tail to the stick and poured a little landa on it. The
dead man's wife offered some mahua liquor in a leaf-cup,
because when her husband was alive one day when they were
drinking they had agreed to die together. The Waddai, there-
fore, said as she was giving the liquor, 'Do not also take her
away with you; release her from her promise; let her live for
a while and look after the other members of the family'.
Then the deceased's son and brother-in-law, who had carried
the rice and pulse, threw it down near the stick. The dead
man's son who had also taken with him a little thatch from
the roof of his house now threw this at the stick saying, 'You
built the house, now accept this'. Similarly, all the other
things of which the old man had been fond when he was alive
were thrown there. His son-in-law, however, picked up his
bow and arrow and his knife was taken by one of the drum-
mers. The drummers then threw away their drum-sticks
into the ashes of the pyre.

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764 Once again the party went to the stream, but the Gaita and the Waddai stayed behind and addressed the saja stick: 'For one month more you will get nothing, don't go to your house, but stay here'. After a bath they all (with the exception of the drummers) went to the deceased's house. The drummers, who are regarded as unclean for the duration of the ceremony, bathed and washed their drums. They applied and placed some rice on the drums. To them they also sacrificed a chicken and offered the blood and some liquor. The drummers were then given rice, which they cooked separately, and a shoulder of the cow. After eating their food they went to their own houses.

769 The conclusion of the story is worth recording. A month later, the Waddai went with the villagers to the boundary of the village carrying a chicken, a pig, an egg, egg-shells, a bamboo bow and arrow, burnt earth from below the hearth, charcoal powder, rice, pulse and haldi. All these things were taken in separate leaf-cups. The Waddai arranged them in seven rows and made a chicken eat the rice, calling on Markami Bando's magic to go away. The chicken ate the rice quickly. But this was not sufficient proof that the black magic had really been driven away, 'because every hungry creature will naturally feed upon what it can get'. The Waddai, therefore, tortured the chicken, first by breaking one leg, and still it ate; he broke another leg, and again it ate; then he broke the wings and the fowl though in pain and agony went on eating. It was now beyond doubt that Bando's magic had been dealt with successfully and the chicken was thrown away, still alive, and not sacrificed. The pig was then sacrificed and the Waddai drew a line on the boundary of the village where the seven rows were arranged, spat there and said, 'Away from this line' and they all departed without looking back. In this ceremony the household members did not take part.

The next day the Waddai sacrificed under a mahua tree near the house a white chicken and broke an egg in honour of the ancestral ghost of Kosa's father. After this he entered the house and sprinkled it with a mixture of milk, saja bark, 774 and dab grass to purify it and sacrificed a black chicken for the Ancestors of the family.

775 Special precautions must, of course, be taken when anyone

775 dies a violent death. The ghost of a man killed by a tiger may possess the animal and drive it to take vengeance on other members of the community: the victim of snake-bite dwells in the snake's tail and drives it to homicidal fury.¹

775 Women dying in pregnancy and childbirth become very
789 dangerous after death and their ghosts must be laid by special ceremonies which include the driving of nails into the knees and elbows of the corpse and at the four corners of the grave, over which a herd of buffaloes may sometimes be driven.

VIII

● 764 In the neighbourhood of almost every Maria village will be found a row of menhirs erected in memory and for the appeasement of the Dead. Sometimes these stones are very large; sometimes they are quite small and are expected to grow bigger in course of time. The majority of clans erect an upright pillar which is called *uraskal*. But a number of them place instead a *danyakal*, a large flat stone supported on four smaller ones.

In the ceremonies attending the bringing of a menhir, the sister's son again plays a leading part. Led by him a party of three drummers and a man beating a gong and twenty or thirty men go out to the quarry where the stone has already been cut out or to some hill where a suitable rock has been observed. The sister's son touches the stone and addresses the dead man. 'In your name', he says, 'we are bringing this stone; let it be light, let not the burden be too heavy'. They place poles below and above the stone, lashing them together with rope. Then the sister's son with a drum in his hand climbs on to the stone and begins to drum with a new rhythm which goes *gul-gucha, gul-gucha, gul-gucha*. Some twenty men lift up the stone whistling loudly, *soor, soor, whee, whee*, and swing it to and fro. Then they move towards the place where the menhir is to be erected, the drummers dancing and drumming in

¹ Such accidental deaths are far from uncommon. In 1933, in the whole State 55 persons were killed by tigers, 10 by panthers, 4 by bears, 53 by drowning, 102 by snake-bite, 53 by falling from trees (chiefly the tall toddy and sago palms). The great majority of these accidents were to aborigines and every one involved the relatives in complex and hazardous ceremonies for their protection.

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front, the sister's son beating his drum above. From time to time they put their burden on the ground to rest, and are refreshed with rice-beer. 764 ●

When the party reaches the pit that has been prepared, the drummers throw the castor-sticks which they have been using hitherto on to the pyre, and take new sticks, which may be made of any kind of wood. Before the stone is erected the Gaita addresses the dead, 'You are dead and you must forget your father, your mother, your brother and your family. This is your house. Live here and do not trouble us or our pigs and cattle. We are giving you rice and pulse and everything that you had at home, so that you may be satisfied'.

In the hole which has been dug by the sister's son, the relatives put something or other, rice, small coins, rings or ornaments, whatever they can afford. The bearers untie the stone from its poles and all push and lift it into position. Earth and stones are rammed round the bottom and a small cromlech is placed in front. On this stone offerings are made by the sister's son with his back to the menhir. The women of the household come and put cooked rice and haldi in leaf-cups on the cromlech, and pour upon it grain, roots, or anything that the dead man used to like when he was alive.

Then the whole party returns to the house and one or more cows are sacrificed. These were probably selected by the dead man during his life-time. They remove the liver and cut it in pieces. Rice is prepared in the house of the dead and divided into four portions and put in leaf-cups. These cups, with the tail of the sacrificed cow and a pot of rice-beer, are carried out in a specially-made basket to the menhir. One portion is put on the ground for Mother Earth and the rest for the dead man on the cromlech. The tail is hung over the menhir and rice-beer poured upon it. At the same time a little rice-beer must be offered to the old menhirs. If this is omitted the ancient dead will be angry and will quarrel with the new spirit that has gone to join them. [764]

Rice-beer must be given both to the menhir and to the mourner's. It must be made fresh in the room where death occurred and served with a gourd with a long handle that 764 273

764 has been specially hollowed out for this purpose. Usually
273 there is no stock of rice-beer at hand and it cannot be made so quickly. The Maria then mix a little mandia flour with water and give this instead.

If for any reason in the course of the ceremony some rite or custom is omitted the spirit of the dead man may attack one or other of the mourners in order to show his displeasure. For example, at Gadapal, Burka Peda told me that they once forgot to give landa to the old menhirs and the insulted Dead attacked his father's sister and she fell down in a fit. They quickly gave both landa and mahua liquor to all the menhirs and she recovered. Again in Mahara-Karka one Kuhrami Eriya was hurled into the fire by the angry ghost and his leg was burnt. If this happens it is a good plan for the victim to run and catch [789] hold of the bamboo poles with which the stone was carried. The Gaita pours water upon him and the angry ghost leaves him alone.

IX

322 When a very well-known or wealthy man dies his family
766 sometimes erects a carved wooden pillar to his memory.
554 There are very few of these pillars, though the custom of making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great and only the most important people are considered worthy of them.

322 These pillars are called by Grigson *uragatta*, a word that
766 is obviously formed on the same plan as *uraskal*, from *urasma* meaning 'to bury' and *gatta*—'a pillar'. I have not myself found any Maria using the word or even recognizing it when it has been put to them. It may be that its use has died out. The Maria to whom I have spoken call these pillars either *munde* (Gondi) or *kambha* (Halbi or Hindi).

The pillars are usually erected near a highway—not necessarily a motorable one. It should simply be near any road or path that is constantly used by the people. The pillars are usually made of *saja* or *sarai* wood and are erected with ceremonies very similar to those for a stone.

There are not many of these pillars, but they are worth looking at. There is a very fine one near Dilmilli

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943

AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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Quarrying memorial stones at Dugali

764



Row of maskal stones

[Facing p. 192]

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things they provided a pot of rice-beer and a pig for his funeral rites. ⁶⁵² 571

V

BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THE DEAD

The reaction of society to violent crime may be seen from the funerary arrangements that are made both for the murderer and his victim. ⁷⁶⁴ 626

In the great majority of cases these arrangements are complicated by the fact that the corpse of the deceased is not available. It is generally taken to headquarters for post-mortem examination, and when a man is hanged in jail his body is disposed of by the prison authorities. This does not mean, however, that the funeral ceremonies are omitted. ⁷⁶⁴ Clothes and other property belonging to the dead are brought back from the Magistrate's Court or from the jail, and these are used to represent the corpse. When Markami Deva killed his wife at Darbha the people brought her clothes, necklace and armlets to the village. These relics were not brought into the house, but were put outside in the yard. The usual funeral drum was not beaten, but the relatives gathered and the brother of the husband (the husband himself was in police custody) put haldi and oil on the things, and a relative by marriage carried them in a basket to a pyre which had been prepared outside the village. Men and women walked behind throwing seeds of rice, maize and pulse mixed together in the basket.

The pyre was under a tree over which a great camel's-foot creeper was growing. They carried the basket round it seven times. Relatives put small pieces of cloth upon it in the usual way and removed them. They hung a bit of cloth on the tree. Then they lit the pyre and went away. They did not erect an uraskal, though here they said that they would

² Everywhere in India the ghost of a murdered man or a suicide is dangerous. The Lushai think a victim's ghost will haunt the murderer and drive him mad. J. Shakespear, *The Lushai Kuki Clans* (London, 1912), p. 78. Both the Lushai and Lakhers perform ceremonies to make the dead man's ghost harmless and to ensure that it becomes the servant of the slayer in the other world. If this is not done, the ghost may blind, lame or paralyse the man who killed him. N. E. Farry, *The Lakhers* (London, 1932), p. 215. Fraser gives many examples from other parts of the world. Sir J. G. Fraser, *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion* (London, 1936), Vol. III, pp. 103 ff.

- 764 have done so if they had been able to afford it. When Doga of Jabeli killed his wife, but was acquitted on appeal, no ceremony was performed for the dead woman at the time. But when Doga returned home, he himself made a small pyre and carried his wife's clothes and ornaments in his own hands, and thus performed the usual ceremonies.

The day after the burning of the pyre two men go to inspect the ashes. When Oyami Anda was hanged they found 'signs of hanging'—the marks of a rope—among the ashes.

- [764] The funeral drum is not beaten for the ceremonies of a man who is hanged or of his victim or when somebody commits suicide. Otherwise the ceremonies are largely the same as usual.

After Kadti Hunga was hanged for murdering his wife Gangi, the clothes of both murderer and victim were put together and covered with earth, and a small pillar of cotton wood was erected nearby.

Sometimes the dead man's clothes are not brought to the house, but are kept outside the village for fear that they may bring the angry ghost along with them. At Killepal and other villages it was the custom to burn the clothes at a cross-roads outside the village.

In the Konta Tahsil, the Maria have a custom of making a small doll or image to serve as a corpse. An unpleasant, quarrelsome fellow called Ido Deva committed a murder at Muler and was hanged. After his death the villagers did not fetch his clothes from the jail but when the fact of his hanging was confirmed, they cut a bit of the gongum tree 'about the length of your forearm', dressed it up in some of Deva's old cloth, put a pair of his ear-rings where the ears might be, and one of his necklaces round the 'neck'. Then just as if it was a real corpse they put it on a bier, covered it with a cloth and carried it out to the pyre (which was in the ordinary cremation-ground) and burnt it. At the head of the pyre they placed a forked saja branch and hung a cow's tail upon it. When I went to the cremation-ground I saw Deva's ashes still fresh and only a few yards away an elder pile of ashes for the man he had murdered. Nearby still lay the pots and a specially-made basket for offering rice to the offended ghost.

Sometimes the corpse is cremated near the menhirs. At

Aranpur I saw a large pile of ashes and half-burnt logs of 764 wood in front of the uraskal stones erected in memory of members of the Barse clan. These were the remains of the pyre for Barse Chewa who had recently been hanged. In this case it was considered of ill omen that, although two attempts were made to burn the pyre, a lot of the wood remained unburnt. In other villages, however, we were told that such ceremonies must not be performed in the neighbourhood of the menhirs.

There seems to be no objection to erecting an uraskal or danyakal stone either for murderers or for their victims. At Palnar an uraskal was mounted for Mulami Bella. At Dugeli an uraskal was erected for a murdered man. In other villages such as Metapal (where there is no uraskal for Banjami Irma who was murdered by his own son) or at Gandarguda (where there is no danyakal for Rawa Hirma) the absence of these memorials is said to be due to the fact that the deceased were poor men and their relatives could not afford them. But at Dugeli, Kunjami Pandu told us that an uraskal for a murdered man can only be erected after the case against the murderer is settled. When his own brother was murdered, he did not at first erect a stone for him, and he was continually troubled by the restless ghost who came in dreams to reproach him for not 'mingling his soul with the dead, and for his failure to give him a stone'. Once Pandu did this, he had no more bad dreams. [757]

The ceremonies of erecting a menhir for a murderer are exactly the same as for anyone else. When the villagers were carrying the stone for Mulami Bella at Palnar, they halted and put it on the ground, and the women of the house threw rings on to it. Afterwards the women eagerly collected these [77] rings, for it is considered very lucky to wear them.

On the forest road between Palnar and Jabeli there is a row of the flat memorial stones called danyakal, and at one end a tall carved wooden pillar and a large earthen tomb. The tomb, the pillar and one of the stones are in honour of Marvi Oyami Masa who died in jail while serving a sentence for the murder of his uncle. Masa was a very important man in Jabeli. He was rich, he was the Waddai of the village and he was a Siraha medicine-man. His death seemed to be far more important to the villagers than that of the man

- 764 he murdered. The stone next to his is for Marvi Buta who was also sentenced for this murder and also died in jail. But there was nothing at all in honour of the murdered man.

764 The erection of a carved memorial pillar is probably the
532 greatest honour that the Maria can pay to the dead. It is the equivalent of being buried in Westminster Abbey. Masa's pillar is a very fine one. It shows him as a Siraha sitting on a swing: a streamer of untidy hair blows out from his head. Another carving shows him mounted on an elephant. Another portrays him riding on a horse attended by his wives. All round him are the symbols of his life: deer and tigers represent his love of the chase; axes, swords and knives symbolize his valour and enterprise; two men carry a pot of rice-beer in memory of his drinking prowess.

775 The business of keeping the ghost of the murderer or his
789 victim quiet naturally greatly exercises the minds of the village medicine-men and priests. There is danger either that the ghost will cause trouble among the other ghosts of the family, and thus by annoying the ancestors may bring trouble upon the living: or it may inspire another member of the family also to commit a murder; or it may return and simply make itself troublesome. At Phulpar, after Pandu had been hanged and the usual ceremonies performed, the village priest sacrificed a hen near the pyre saying, 'Now we make your home here: live here with your ancestors peacefully'. If they fail to do this, they said, they think someone else in the house will also commit a murder. Then they erected a saja pole and after sacrificing a cow to appease the ghost of the dead man, each relative in turn picked up the cow's tail, saluted it and hung it on the pole. The Waddai went to a corner of the room where the Pot of the Departed was kept, sprinkled liquor there and addressed the ghost: 'Live now with your sons. Do not go to your daughters. Care for the people of your house. See that your children prosper'.

Often, after the ceremony of burning the clothes and ornaments, a man sits in the house of the deceased and the ghost comes upon him. He is led out to the pyre, and there he buries a bhut kukri, a ghost hen, to ensure that the ghost will not come to the house and trouble its relatives.

The ghost of the murderer or his victim becomes a Mischuk.

775of Chichari described how this happened to three of his
758 fellow-prisoners and they all died. Boti of Telam suffered
a similar visitation and was ill for a whole year.

766 In several places I found that a house or a village had been
146 moved from its original site after a murder had been committed there. At Arampur, for example, the house in which Chewa killed his father-in-law was destroyed, and a new house was built elsewhere for the widow and other members of the family. At Doriras the whole village was shifted from its former site in the year following the murder of Kawasi Boti. Muler village also was shifted after the murder of Rawa Harina.

VI

- 764 The funeral ceremonies of a suicide are performed in the
762 same way with the clothes and ornaments taking the place of the corpse. When Masa's younger wife hanged herself at Samgiri, her body after the post-mortem examination was buried at Dantewara. Her clothes and ornaments were taken out to a cross-roads and cremated according to the customary ritual. Her scythe, rice-husker and winnowing-fan were placed at the spot, but the scythe was picked up and carried home by one of her husband's relatives. Next morning they went to inspect the ashes and found distinct marks of hanging. A chicken was used to divine the cause of death,
[767] and it indicated that the woman had been angry and committed suicide in a fit of temper. The tragedy was in fact due to the girl's complaint that her husband did not pay her enough attention. The chicken's neck was then twisted, the head removed, split into through the beak and thrown away.
- 762 In Borgum village, the wife of Markami Pide committed
766 suicide because she was in love with another man and did not care for her husband. The body was taken to Dantewara for the post-mortem and buried there. The clothes were taken back to the village and burnt outside together with her mat, winnowing-fan, rice-husker and sickle. The next day the Priest of the Dead put rice and roots round the pyre. He made seven small piles of rice and brought a chicken saying, 'You were angry and put an end to your life; now become cool and rest in peace here and trouble none of us,

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for this is your home'. When the chicken had pecked at the rice, he twisted its neck and threw it on the still-burning pyre. A pig and a cow were then sacrificed and an uraskal erected the same day. After returning to the house they made a rough drawing with flour of the garden and of the house with its various rooms on the floor. On this pattern they again offered rice to a hen saying, 'We have now made a house for you; don't stay outside any longer, but remain here'.

The ghost of the suicide, like that of a murderer, becomes a Mirchuk and lives in an ant-hill. If the Mirchuk gets angry, it may possess a member of the family, and he too may commit suicide unless the proper offerings are not made at once. The suicide's ghost may also come to the village and cause trouble in a variety of ways. As we have seen elsewhere, the Mirchuk is often used as a familiar by witches. It is most important that the soul of a suicide should not be 'mingled with the Dead'. In some villages they say that this prohibition is absolute. In Dugeli, they said that they should wait a year. A menhir should not be erected. A remarkable double suicide at Khutepal illustrates the danger of ignoring these rules. Bandi, the headmen of this village, had two wives. One day they quarrelled, and the elder wife hanged herself in a rage. Her funeral ceremony was performed as though the death had been a natural one. Her soul was mingled with the Dead, and an uraskal memorial pillar was erected for her in the place used by other members of the clan. It is believed that, when this is done, the suicide's ghost quarrels with the other ghosts of the clan and annoys them. In this case the angry Dead so troubled the wife of Bandi's younger son, who was living in the same house, that she too committed suicide after a quarrel with her mother-in-law. This second suicide was regarded by the villagers as the immediate result of having erected a memorial pillar and mingled the soul of the older woman with the ancestral Dead. When the girl's ceremonies were performed, therefore, they carefully burnt her clothes in a place away from the usual crematorium and, although they gave her an uraskal, they did not sacrifice a cow or hang its tail in the usual manner round the stone.

At Dualarka, however, they said that an uraskal should